

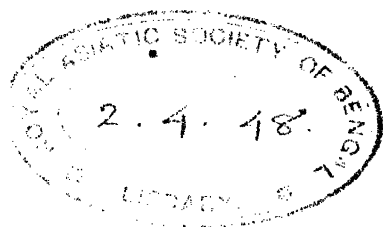
THE
ORTHODOX
DEVIL

MARK GUY
PEARSE

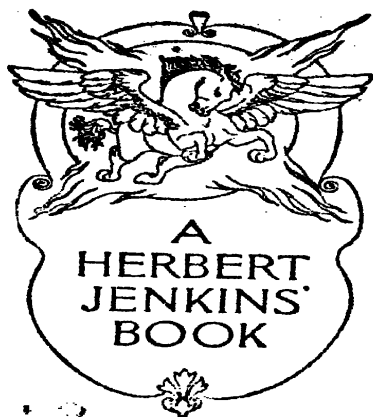
THE ORTHODOX DEVIL

THE ORTHODOX : : DEVIL : :

BY
MARK GUY PEARSE



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TO
THE MEMORY OF
JOHN WESLEY, A.M.
PRIEST IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
AND
FOUNDER OF METHODISM,
WHOSE NAME AND WORK SHOULD BE EVER A BOND OF
UNION BETWEEN THEM.

On reading these papers in collected form—written at different times, and occasionally at long intervals—I find here and there a repetition for which I must ask the forgiveness of my readers.

I wish gratefully to acknowledge the courtesy of the Editor for permitting the use of the articles which have appeared in *The Methodist Recorder*.

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As life from life alone doth spring :
As light from light doth come alone :
So love in least and lowest thing
Is held by God to be His Own,
He who is Love, " For unto me
Love giveth all it doth," saith He.

It is the monarch's effigy
That giveth gold its currency.
And love in deed, and word, and thought
Hath God's own image in it wrought.

All our might
Used aright
Purgeth sight.
Sacrifice
Cleanseth eyes
That are dim.

And Love hath this exceeding great reward
The clearer vision of her glorious Lord.

HIS CREED

They questioned his theology,
And talked of modern thought ;
Bade him recite a dozen creeds.
He could not as he ought.

He answer made, " I've got one creed,
And do not want another :
I know I've passed from death to life
Because I love my brother.

I

THE ORTHODOX DEVIL

“IT is impossible to imagine that the devil has any erroneous opinions ! ”

Who is bold enough to make such a statement ? It is not the utterance of a fanatic, ignorant and irresponsible. He who says it is the calm and logical John Wesley.

And is there not the record of a yet greater authority ? Is it not written in the Scriptures, “ The devils believe ”—a belief that is no mere argument, but a conviction that fills their whole being—they believe and tremble ? They know God as we have never known Him—can, indeed, never know Him in this world. They have felt His power as we have never felt it.

If, then, orthodoxy is religion—and with how many it is so—then, indeed, is the devil most religious.

Ah, that terrible religion of the devil—what is it ? *Orthodoxy without brotherliness, and religion without love.*

Think of it, earnestly, solemnly. What is the cruellest thing that ever came into God’s world ? Not war at its bloodiest and fiercest, hateful and terrible as that is. Not strong

drink, with its bestiality and brutality. Look back over the ages so far as we have any record of the world's religious history. We shall find that the cruellest thing that ever came into God's world is *religion without love*. It has kindled more fires for the burning of martyrs; it has invented more diabolical tortures, it has wrought more dire and dreadful suffering, than war and strong drink put together.

Strange and terrible truth! That which should have tamed the savage nature of man, that which should have refined him into gentleness and patient forbearance, to sunny sweetness and glad unselfishness, has turned him into a very monster of cruelty. Heathen, Jew, Mohammedan, Christian, have proved themselves alike in this. It is in the annals of the world's religion that we shall find hosts of men filled with a hatred, not only incapable of pity, but unable to satisfy its passionate cruelty.

We recall with horror the massacre on St. Bartholomew's Eve, when thousands of men, women, and children were murdered in cold blood for their religion. And only less terrible than the massacre itself was the rejoicing when the tidings reached Rome. "In the Holy City there was a universal outpouring of thanksgiving. Cannons were fired; the streets were illuminated. Pope Gregory walked in procession with his cardinals from sanctuary to sanctuary, to offer their sacrifice of adoring gratitude. The scene of the massacre was painted by the Pope's order, with an inscription immortalising his own gratitude and approval.

He struck a commemorative medal, with on one side his own image, on the other the Destroying Angel immolating the Huguenots. He despatched a cardinal to Paris to congratulate the King; and the assassins on whose hands the blood of the innocents was scarcely dry, knelt before the holy man in the cathedral, and received his apostolic blessing."

We think of the diabolical tortures of the Inquisition in Spain. As Moccata writes: "In the middle of the sixteenth century, the golden age of modern art, the flourishing period of newly-revived literature, when the rough habits, engendered by constant turmoil and discord, were giving place to milder manners, the awful spectre of the Inquisition became a living reality in the whole breadth of the Peninsula, and throughout those enormous colonies in America, in Africa, and in Asia, which were subject to the crowns of Spain and Portugal."

It is impossible to imagine what awful torture this far-reaching power wrought throughout its dominions. The Jesuit historian Mariana assures us that in one year (1481) fully two thousand were burnt in the Archbishopric of Seville and the Bishopric of Cadiz. The Quemada, or cremation place in Seville, a square platform of stone, was a grim altar on which almost daily the lives of victims perished in the flames.

Can we wonder at the outburst of Froude, who writes of these times, and especially of the hundreds of British sailors who endured the

agonies of the Inquisition? "The religion of Christ was exchanged for the Christian religion. God gave the gospel. The Father of Lies invented theology. The highest obedience was held to lie in the profession of a particular dogma on inscrutable problems of metaphysics. Forgiveness and mercy were proclaimed for moral offences; the worst sins were light in comparison with heresy; while it was insisted that the God of Love, revealed by Christ, would torture in hell-fire for ever and ever the souls of those who held wrong opinions as to His nature, however pure and holy their lives and conversation might be."

Nor was it only on one side that we find this spirit of persecution. "The Catholic, on the authority of the Church, made war upon spiritual rebellion. The Protestant believed himself commissioned to extinguish the worshippers of images. 'No mercy to heretics,' was the watchword of the Inquisition. 'The idolators shall die,' was the answering thunder of the disciples of Calvin." (Froude.)

"The Spaniards," says Taylor in his "Words and Places," were devout observers of the festivals of the Church, and this often enables us to fix the date of their discoveries. St. Augustine, the oldest town in the United States, was founded on St. Augustine's Day by Melendez, who was sent by Philip II, of Spain, on the pious mission of exterminating a feeble colony of Huguenot refugees who were seeking the religious liberty that was denied them in their native land.

A religious feeling equally intense is evinced in the names which mark the site of the earlier Puritan colonies in North America. *Salem* was intended to be the earthly realisation of the New Jerusalem, where a new reformation was to eradicate every frailty of our human nature. The penalties indicate how it was to be accomplished.

"No one shall run on the Sabbath or walk in his garden."

"No one shall make beds, cut hair, or shave, and no woman shall kiss her child on the Sabbath."

"No one shall make mince pies or play any instrument except the trumpet, the drum or the jew's harp."

"No food or lodging shall be given to any Quaker or other heretic."

Roger Williams, a noble-hearted man, who had been chosen as minister at Salem, dared to affirm the heresy that "the doctrine of persecution for cause of conscience is most evidently and lamentably contrary to the doctrine of Jesus Christ; and that no man should be bound to worship against his own consent." Sentence of death was pronounced against him. He wandered forth in the snows of a New England winter; "for fourteen weeks," he says, "he often in the stormy nights had neither food nor fire, and no shelter but in a hollow tree."

The savages showed him the mercy which his fellow Christians denied him. An Indian chief gave him food and shelter. But that

wigwam in the far forest was declared to be within the jurisdiction of the Puritan colony, and this Apostle of Toleration was hunted even from the wilderness. He embarked with five companions in a canoe and landed on Rhode Island. With simple piety he called the first land he touched *Providence*—a place which still remains the capital of Rhode Island—a state that Williams founded as “a shelter for persons distressed in conscience.”

It is strange, indeed, to find those who had gone forth from their homes, enduring the perils and discomforts of another land in order to find freedom to worship God, yet themselves subjecting to the death penalty all Quakers, as well as all persons guilty of idolatry, witchcraft, or blasphemy.

Let us remember that the heresy of one age becomes the orthodoxy of the next. One generation stones the prophet. The next generation erects a monument to his memory.

The Arminianism which was the strength and glory of the Methodist Revival was, but a hundred years before, a deadly heresy to the Independent and Presbyterian—so deadly, that one of them braved the penalty which his pamphlet incurred: Twice to stand in the pillory, to have both his ears cut off, to be branded on each cheek, to be fined thousands of pounds, and to be imprisoned for life.

In Fitchett's *Life of Wesley* he tells of an old Calvinistic minister to whom one said, “Would you not cut the throat of every Methodist if you could?” The old man blazed with fury,

“ And, indeed, did not Samuel hew Agag in pieces before the Lord ! ”

Did not John Wesley declare that Whitfield’s religion made God worse than the devil—more false, more cruel, more unjust ? Yet who shall think that John Wesley was dearer to the Heavenly Father than was George Whitfield ?

Let us recall the time when the orthodox Church threatened to burn the miserable heretic who should dare to assert that the earth went round the sun, and to deny that the sun went round the earth. What was to become of the Scriptures if such a thing were believed ? To be proved wrong in one thing was to destroy its force in all. How could the Bible be true unless the sun really rose and set as the Lord Jesus declared ? How could Joshua make the sun stand still unless it were going on ? How could the world be round when the Bible talked of the corners of the earth ?

By and by these terribly orthodox people found that they were quite wrong, as the ages will go on finding that we are wrong about many things that the Church has denounced with the spirit, if not the penalty, that threatened Galileo of old.

And may we not make a parable of it ? The great sun in the heavens said indignantly, “ Unless they treat me with rightful honour and put me in my proper position, they shall have no light, no warmth ; they shall have no grass, no fruit, no flowers, no corn.” No, indeed. “ Poor dears,” said the great sun pitifully, “ whatever they think about me, they need

my light and my warmth. They want their corn, their grass, their flowers, their fruit." And when they put the sun in its right place there was not another buttercup, nor a daisy the brighter.

Most reverently may we carry our illustration to the great Creator of sun and earth—the loving Father of us all? If it be true that no man can be saved by his orthodoxy, is it not equally true that no man shall be lost for the lack of it?

If, when we were yet sinners God loved us, shall He make His love to us dependent upon our broken notions about Him? The more foolish I am, the more I need His pity and help.

The Lord Jesus bade us think of the mother and father in relation to their children as the great revelation of our Heavenly Father towards us. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father care for you, and minister to you, and do you good?

We dare not think of a mother as many people think of God. If only men would think of God as they think of a mother, they would have a new God, and a true God. Try to imagine a mother saying to her little child, "Little one, I cannot love you until you understand all about the mystery of fatherhood and motherhood, and all about the physiology of life and birth." Poor little one!

And is the love of our Father God to be put to shame by the love of the mother which He Himself has made? Think of that much

more—an infinite more—much more shall your Father which is in Heaven pity and love us, His poor little ignorant and mistaken children.

Alas, what do I know of anything? What do I know of myself? What makes my heart beat? No man knows. Whence comes this life of mine—what does it depend upon—whither does it go? Who, then, am I to bring the Most High into definitions, and dream that His love and my salvation depend upon them? Surely there is no more perilous heresy than to set limits and conditions about the infinite love of our Heavenly Father.

The truth lives. And, because it lives, it grows. Does not the Lord Jesus still say to His disciples, "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now"? And is not the providence of God for ever fitting the world to receive the richer, fuller, deeper, higher truth?

We laugh at our grandfathers—not unkindly—a laugh of amusement, not of ridicule—not in any way forgetting their goodness and the beauty of their character. We say they had some funny notions. And let us be assured of this—our grandchildren will laugh in the same way at us. Let us hope, in no way less kindly. It will be a sad thing for them if they do not go as far ahead of us as we have gone ahead of our grandfathers. We cannot keep the truth where we found it, any more than they could.

A friend of mine with whom I was talking

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DIATRIC SOCIETY

of these things remarked, " But does it not say that God is angry with the wicked every day ? " " Of course He is," I said. " Think of yourself passing along the street some night. There are a lot of boys making a noise—it may be fiercely quarrelling, and almost ready to fight. ' What a pity it is,' you say to yourself, as you hurry homewards, ' that these boys should behave like this.' But now you catch sight of your boy among them—now you are angry. Why ? Because he is yours. You are angry because you love. Anger is the white heat of love—the indignation of love. God is angry because He loves."

Is not this the source and sum of all our theology—*He that loveth knoweth God ; for God is love* ? And is not this the one sure proof of our religion—We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love our brother ?

Alas, that we should be compelled to think that in our Churches there is so often the religion that is satisfied with its orthodoxy—without brotherliness; and with its services—lacking love.

Take heed, therefore, and beware of the orthodoxy of the devil.

II

THE PARSON AND THE SHOEMAKER

PENULUNA'S van was a delightful place for gossip. It was slow and leisurely, without the roar and rattle of the train, so that everybody could hear what was said. In Penuluna's van there was nothing to look at but each other, so you looked and talked—or else were content to listen and think while others talked, as I did on the occasion of which I would tell.

The travellers were few that day, as we journeyed into the Church-town. There was the Rector of the parish, a big, sturdy man, from up the country somewhere, who would have liked the people better if he had been born and bred amongst them. He knew them mostly, almost only, as antagonistic to his High Church views and ways. And the people would have liked him better if they could have drawn nearer to him as a man, and known him as something more than a parson.

Opposite to him sat the village shoemaker, a little man with black whiskers sinking down in the hollow of his cheeks, and giving to his big protruding chin a provoking prominence. The mouth was tight and tended downward

at the corners ; a long upper lip, and above it a round button of a nose. The brows came heavily over his eyes—a grim, defiant kind of man, eager for an argument, whether on politics or religion, yet not without a ready humour that he could turn to good account. . .

In politics he was a red-hot Radical ; in religion a red-hot Particular Baptist. In politics there were a few who went some way with him, but in his religious opinions he was alone, the only representative of the faith, and so its champion. He read much, but only such literature as favoured his own way of thinking—he could find no room in his thoughts for what he did not agree with.

Narrow, cocksure, pugnacious as he was, I felt sure that the journey could not go long without his drifting into a controversy with the Church parson who was a Tory as well as High Churchman, and I wondered within myself whether it would be political or religious.

It began very soon. * The little shoemaker folded the local paper which he had been reading and put it in his pocket. Then he took off his spectacles and put them in a wooden case. By way of throwing down the gauntlet he leaned forward and tapped the parson's knee with the spectacle case.

" Deal of talk goin' on, I see, about the Churches coming closer together. What do *you* think of it, Passen ? "

The parson had fallen into a restful doze, and started. " I beg your pardon. I did not quite follow your remark."

Then the shoemaker's mouth tightened and bit the words. "All this here talk about the Churches coming closer together—what's the good of it? That's what I do want to know—what's the good of it?"

"Well, I hope it may bring us nearer to each other; that is my earnest hope."

"Nearer together!" and the shoemaker drew himself up and said scornfully, "Pooh!" He leaned back in his seat and muttered, "Nearer together!"

"Well, I think certainly for us to get nearer together and understand each other better would be a good thing—a very good thing."

"Nearer together!" and again the little shoemaker laughed scornfully. "Shall I tell 'ee what it do mind me of? The other day I was going along the road, and there was a storm coming. The great black clouds was in the sky. You could see the rain beating thick on the moors, and now and then came a flash o' lightning and a roll of thunder. Well, I opened the gate of a field for to get under the shelter of the hedge—a big hedge it was, with big thorn bushes on top of it coming over anybody like a great umbrella. I crooked down the hedge so snug as could be.

"Presently the cattle came galloping up to the hedge 'pon my side, and I could hear the scamper of the cattle 'pon the other. 'B-o-o-h!' says one of the bullocks 'pon one side. 'B-o-o-h!' says one of they bullocks 'pon the other side. But, bless 'ee, Passen, there was that great hedge between them, and they great thorn

bushes 'pon top of it. They'd come nearer together, but they didn't know each other any more for that."

"But will you not give us credit for more intelligence than the cattle?" said the parson with a little laugh. "It is not a complimentary way to talk of men and women, especially Christian men and women."

But the shoemaker was not to be checked or turned away by any interruption.

"Well," he went on, "that there was to my mind a kind of parable, Passen. The Churches, Church of England so well as the rest of 'em, can see there's a storm coming that's going to shake a good many things that have stood for years. 'What shall us do?' says they, a bit anxious and frightened. 'Let us come together, and understand each other better.' But what's the good o' that when there's that great hedge between 'em with they great thorn bushes 'pon top of it that there's no getting over? You can't find a gap in that for to get through, and not so much as a gate from one field to another. So there you are." The little shoemaker drew himself up and tapped his own knee with his spectacle case triumphantly. "Iss, there you are."

"And what do you mean by the hedge with the thorn bushes on it?" asked the parson.

"Mean by it!" snapped the little shoemaker. "I do mean the Sacrament, what you do call the Holy Communion."

The parson drew himself back and folded his arms, evidently unwilling to let so sacred a

matter become the subject of a heated controversy. But the shoemaker must go on with it.

"Iss, Passen, there's the hedge that there's no getting over, and there's no creeping under, and no gate for to go through, neither. You do believe that when you do take the bit o' bread in your hand you can turn it into the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if anybody else but a passen do give it 'tis nothing but a bit o' bread still. Aw, dear, dear! 'tis amazin', amazin'!" And the shoemaker leaned back again.

The parson sat still with folded arms, and made no reply.

"Look at it, look at it!" cried the little shoemaker, thinking the silence meant the confusion of his opponent. "A man that you do call a bishop puts four fingers and a thumb on top of your head, and because of that——"

"You must not talk of these mysteries so flippantly," said the parson, in a tone of reproof.

"'Tisn't flippant, Passen—no, 'tisn't flippant," said the shoemaker. "'Tis *indignant*."

"I am quite willing to talk of these holy mysteries," said the parson quietly, "if you are only willing to think of them reverently. You must not be offended if I remind you that we are not to give things that are holy to those who can only bark and bite. You will forgive me, I am sure."

It was spoken in such a pleasant and quiet way that the shoemaker was half inclined to soften his tone.

"Well, I do get a bit hot when I think about it," he said. And he drew out a large red handkerchief and mopped himself with it, as if the heat were physical only.

Then the parson leaned forward and began. "Well, now, let us look at it quietly and devoutly. You remember that the Blessed Lord Jesus said, 'Except ye eat My flesh and drink My blood ye have no part in Me.'"

Again the little shoemaker blazed as he leaned forward and snapped, "'Tis figurative—not literal, o' course; 'tis figurative."

"Now, I have listened patiently to you," said the parson, "and I must ask you to listen as quietly to me. 'Except ye eat My flesh and drink My blood,' said the Blessed Lord. Think of anyone else saying it, any great religious leader. Think of St. Paul saying it, John Wesley or General Booth. It would be absurd, and worse than absurd. From the lips of the Lord Jesus the words must have some great mysterious meaning. Perhaps you remember that many of those who had followed the Lord up to that time, were offended at the saying and turned back and followed Him no more. They lost the Saviour because they stumbled at His words.

"The Master saw the controversy that would arise out of the words, yet He did not soften them, but repeated them with great emphasis at the most sacred moment of the Church's history. At the Last Supper the Lord Jesus took the bread and brake it, and said, 'This is My Body which is broken for you.' And He

took the cup and said, ' This is My Blood which is shed for you.' Now to me here is the mystery and miracle that constitutes and declares the Church of Christ—this perpetual miracle which brings to us the very Body of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, at this point, when to me the conversation became of the deepest interest, Penuluna's van drew up at the market town, and we must part.

" Well," said the shoemaker, as he rose towards the door. " There 'tis again, that great hedge with the thorn bushes 'pon top of it, and without a gap or a gate. Us can't find our way over that. Good morning."

The parson, and shoemaker and I went our several ways.

That night I sat in my little room in the village, thinking of the morning's talk, and recalled the shoemaker's words. " Us can't both be right, Passen." On his side, at any rate, there had been a look of triumphant assurance, as if the outcome were certain. I smiled as I saw again his clever picture of the great hedge with the thorny bushes and the lowing cattle on either side of it, coming nearer, but not much the better for that.

" The shoemaker is certainly right in one thing," I said to myself, as I leaned back in the easy chair. " There's a storm coming that is going to shake a good many things—inside the Churches, and outside, too."

I sat before the fire thinking the matter over until it was late, and I fell asleep. My thoughts gave place to a dream, clear and vivid, as dreams seldom are.

Again I saw the parson and the shoemaker—but they stood before the great White Throne, whereon sat the Blessed Lord as Judge. Boldly spoke the parson as he bowed reverently in that sacred Presence. “Here are Thine own words, my Lord, which I took as if Thou didst mean them. I trust I have not erred.”

I think it must have been my own subconsciousness that softened the tone and words with which the shoemaker made answer to the Lord the Judge. “I read Thy words, O Lord, but could not take them literally—*could not*. The very nature that Thou hast given me, all my being shrank from a thing that seemed to me so outrageous that I can scarcely put it into words—eating human flesh and drinking human blood! My Lord, my Lord! I could not. I trust Thou wilt bear with Thy servant in this thing.”

Then I saw a smile on the face of the Lord, most gracious and loving. “My children, My children,” said He, “there is room for you both in My heart, and there is room for you both in My Heaven.”

Then were parson and shoemaker lost in the light.

III

CAN GOD REVIVE HIS WORK ?

WE are all praying, " Lord, revive Thy work. Lord, save souls." But, really, can God do it ?

There was a time when it was done—and I am not sure that it was in answer to prayer. It came of itself, naturally, irresistibly. To revive His work is surely what the Blessed Father of all men desires to do far more than we ever want Him to do it. As surely as He revives the earth with sunshine and shower in the spring-time, so surely does He seek to revive all things heavenly and blessed within the souls of men. But can He do it ?

There is an awful saying in the Gospels : "*He could do there no mighty work.*"

Think of it. All the great longing of His heart, all the yearning of His love undone. He who raised Lazarus from the dead, who opened a blind man's eyes, who healed a trembling leper, *could do nothing*. The Almighty powerless ! Omnipotence paralysed ! Why ? Because no man put himself in line with God to fulfil His plans and purposes. .

We pray, " Give us this day our daily bread." Yet God Himself can only answer that prayer

when the man puts himself in line with heaven and earth. He must fulfil the conditions, or he will get no bread. Up there is the sunshine and shower; down here is the earth. Then comes the man who puts himself in line with each of them. He goes forth with the plough to turn the furrows; he goes forth to fling the seed corn. Then God can answer our prayer, but only then. Then only is the daily bread ours.

So is it with all life, spiritual as well as natural. We must fulfil the conditions, or God's love and power can do nothing.

Let us rouse ourselves earnestly to ask, feeling the tremulous significance of it all—When was it that God added to the Church daily such as were being saved?

It was when His people were consumed with a great brotherliness—it was when the flames of God's love melted all within them to a Divine compassion and eager helpfulness. Here is the record: "All that believed were together and had all things common. And sold their possessions and goods and parted to every man as every man had need. And the Lord added daily to the Church such as were being saved."

Now, honestly, what do we make of it? We pooh-pooh it aside with a breath of indifference if we think of it at all. And if one should urge it, at once it is met with an angry contempt. What nonsense! You don't mean seriously to require any such condition as that. It is sheer and blank Socialism. It is simply a rude Communism.

CAN GOD REVIVE HIS WORK? 29

Yes, Socialism—but the Socialism of Jesus Christ, “Who was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich.” Communism—but the Communism of God *our* Father, whose Fatherhood means a true brotherhood among men.

If that were made a condition of Church membership, we see the crowds going forth from its midst of whom it should be again recorded, “He went away grieved; for he had great possessions.”

But let us at any rate be willing to consider this much: Can God revive His work in the Church where there is no brotherliness and love? If our religion means a selfish salvation, that and that only and nothing else, must it not be written to-day as of old: “*He could there do no mighty work*”?

What, then, is the matter with the Churches? All admit and bewail the fact that there is something the matter. What is it? Here it is; put your finger right on it: *Orthodoxy without brotherliness; and religion without love.*

We are very familiar with the phrase, “Dear brethren,” and even “Dearly beloved brethren”; but where is the brotherhood? Take one fact, and let it settle the matter. The poor old body that kneels next to me at the Lord’s Table may go to the Workhouse to-morrow.

“Well,” you say, “what is that to me? I give something to the collection for the poor, and what more can anybody expect?”

Alas! *He could there do no mighty work.*

Have we forgotten the saying of the Lord

Jesus—"He who saves his soul shall lose it." It is only he who gives his soul away in love, who shall find it.

Is it really worth while for God to revive His work if our religion is only the blind and miserable selfishness of saving our own souls and going to Heaven when we die, content to live in utter indifference to our neighbour? If the great test of our religion is ignored, what is it worth? Here it is: "*If a man say I love God, and loveth not his brother, he is a liar.*"

"*He that loveth not abideth in death.*"

Is it really worth while for God to revive His work if the man in the Church can be as mean and unbrotherly as anybody else? If he can be as snappy and snarly; if he can be as quick to take offence and as spiteful in showing it; if he can be as jealous as anybody else, and as angry when he cannot have his own way?

Is it worth while for God to revive His work if the man in the Church, in spite of the solemn warning against desiring to be rich, can be as eager and keen to be rich as anybody else; can put that first and foremost in his thoughts, his efforts, his life, for which everything else must be set aside; if he can be quick to take advantage of his neighbour's misfortune or ignorance; if he can be content to ruin his poor brother by mean advantage-taking or by under-selling?

Is it worth God's while to revive His work if the man in the Church can spend huge sums of money on luxuries and self-indulgence, and be content to give God only of the superfluity

CAN GOD REVIVE HIS WORK? 31

of his wealth that costs him nothing? Can God revive His work in such conditions?

Let the preacher preach this much, at any rate; let the Guild members take it as the motto for a devotional meeting: The religion that does not save a man out of selfishness into love will never save him out of any hell into heaven.

Where love is, there God is. And where love is not, there God is not. And where God is not, what hope of any revival? Again it shall be recorded, *He could there do no mighty work.*

IV

BECKY MURGATROYD SPEAKS HER MIND

TOLD BY HER LEADER

POOOR old Becky—she is a great favourite of mine; clear seeing and clear thinking, she can get to the heart of things with as few words in doing it as any one I ever knew. Bright, happy, contented, surprisingly so to many, but not to me who knew her long faith in God, and the bravery with which she has accepted her lot. And a hard lot indeed it is. For years she had toiled in the fields, in bleak weather as well as in fine weather, sometimes drenched to the skin and sometimes numbed with the cold, living on a wage that was hardly enough to keep body and soul together, yet managing to do it somehow, and never failing to give her penny a week and shilling a quarter. Now she lived on her Old Age Pension, and almost hesitated to accept the dole that I got for her from the Poor Fund.

I had persuaded our new young minister to call and see her, and to take her the Quarterly Ticket, thinking it would do them both good.

A few days afterwards I called, anxious to know how the interview had gone off.

Becky sat in the kitchen of her little cottage, just finishing her midday meal.

"That's done," she said, as she put the iron spoon in the empty basin.

"What have you had, Becky?" I said.

"A basin o' kettle broth. 'Tis nourishin' and 'tis easy made and 'tis cheap."

"Do you tell me how you make it," I said, for she smacked her lips over the last spoonful with evident enjoyment.

Becky laughed. Hers was a face always worth looking at, but best when she laughed—the eyes twinkled then with good humour—but they could blaze when need be—and her lips were more used to smile than to scold, but they could tighten and fling out fierce sayings when the fires were kindled within her—which was not very often.

"Tell *thee* how to make kettle broth! Thee'll never come to that. But thee may so well know. You see, when your teeth can't eat so well as they used to do, crusties is things that's hard to manage, but for all that they're things that a poor body can't afford to throw away. So you sets them in the basin, and puts in a sprinkle o' salt and pepper, and a lump o' margarine. Then pour boiling water over the lot and lev' it soak—and there you are. A dainty dish to set before a king—at any rate, if he can't get anything else." And Becky laughed again. "So that's kettle broth, and now thee knows."

"Well, you had a call from our young minister," I said, as we gathered by her little fire.

Becky's face was changed at once. The little eyes flashed, the smile vanished, the mouth tightened, and the underlip was thrust out scornfully. Her only response was a grunt, "Aye."

"I hope you were glad to see him."

There was no answer.

"There was nothing wrong?" I said, wondering at the change in her face and manner.

"Glad to see him? Well, if there was any gladness in it, I'm feared it was to see him go."

"But I gave him the Quarterly Ticket to bring to you."

"Aye—and he brought it reet enough—he brought it. But he took it away agen."

Here was a mystery indeed, and I waited for Becky to tell the story. It was some minutes before she began.

"Weel, I'll tell thee how it came abaht. I were sittin' in t' chair when there came a knock to the door. 'Come in,' says I. So in he come. My! A proper gentleman. And he puts his hat 'pon t' chair and lays his gloves alongside.

"'Seven and sixpence,' says 'I to mysen! Then he set back his coit, and I seed a gold ring on t' finger, and a great gold chain spannin' his westcoit. 'Umph!' says I to mysen.

"'I have been asked by your leader to come and see you, and to bring you the Quarterly Ticket.' And he sets it down 'pon table.

"I looked him over from head to foot, and then says I, 'If I hadn't kept t' rules and regglelaytions o' Society I shouldn't have any reet to Ticket, I reckon?'"

"'Certainly not,' says he.

"'Umph!' says I. 'And thee art minister!'"

"'Yes,' says he, like a thing toot back a bit.

"'And thee art bahnd to keep rules and regglelaytions same as I am, on'y more so, for thee art an example to the flock.'

"'Well!' says he.

"'Give me t' Bible off t' shelf,' I says. So I opened it and took out rules and regglelaytions. 'Thou hast brought my Quarterly Ticket,' I says, 'and thee may tak' it back agen, and tell Leader to bring it his sen.'

"'But he asked me to bring it,' says he.

"'Aye, and I ax thee to tak' it back.'

"'Really,' says he, 'this is very amazing.'

"'Happen 'tis,' says I. 'But if thee'll tak' it reet it may be very edifyin'.'

"'I don't understand you at all,' says he.

"'Weel, lad,' I says, 'I'll show thee. Here's rules and regglelaytions o' Methodist Society. And here's one on 'em sayin' thee's not to put on gold or costly apparel.'

"'But 'tis a present,' says he, fingerin' the chain.

"'Then, lad,' says I, 'the only thing for thee to do is to mak' a present of it to some poor body with an empty belly and a bare back, same as rules and regglelaytions tells

thee to. Here 'tis,'—and I read it out to him—'Doin' good to all men, to their bodies by giving food to the hungry and clothing the naked.' Dost think thy Lord and Master, the Carpenter, would go abaht with a gold ring on his finger and a gold chain over his coit? Nay, lad, tak' ticket back to Leader, and tell him to bring it his sen. And when thou dost begin to keep rules and regglelaytions o' Society thou can come again.'

"He got up for to go, when I says, 'Lad, I've got a word more for thee if thou canst stop a minute. Folks don't like thy preachin'. Preachin'! It isn't preachin' to read a bit o' summat abaht religion from a piece o' paper. Think if Jesus Christ on the Mount read them summat abaht religion from a piece o' paper—maybe with a lot of grand words in it that common folks couldn't make nowt of! They'd have gone away home—I should—and not come back agen, either.,

"'And hast ever thought what 'He preached abaht? He preached about the wants o' t' people, and how the Heavenly Father cares for folks same as mother and father cares for their bairns.

"'Seemin' to me, lad, thou hast been so long with thy Latin and Greek, thou hast forgotten what the common folks is like. If thou would go out and learn about the wants of the people, happen the Lord may have the makkin' of a preacher in thee yet. It is the same as in any other line o' business, thine is. 'Tis no good goin' to market with things folks

don't want, and thou hast got to find out for thyself what they do want. Then thou canst preach. Thee munna be offended. I'll promise thee one thing, and I can do nowt better—I'll pray for thee every neet and mornin'."

"I am afraid he didn't like it," I said.

"Happen not," said Becky, "happen not. I don't know as I likes salts and senna, but there's times it does me good. It all depends how he taks it."

"I'm afraid he won't come again."

"*He will*," said Becky, "*he will*. Thou'lt see. Thou canst send next Quarterly Ticket by him, and I'll be glad to have it."

Becky was right. Her faith was justified.

WHAT CAME OF IT

The picture that rises before me as I begin is of the incident when two of David's soldiers came flying down the hill from their pursuers. A woman sat winnowing the corn—a sheet spread and she flinging the grains for the wind to bear away the husks and the chaff—common dusty work. But underneath the sheet was a shallow well with a bubbling spring. On came the soldiers seeking refuge. In an instant the woman's heart was filled with pity. "Here," she cried, "creep under the sheet and hide in the well." A moment later and they were hidden. Again she sat, and the corn was flung and the husks flew.

On came the pursuers. Had she seen them? With ready wit she said, "Yes, yes, and they have gone over the brook."

So it is that underneath the dusty work of our common life there are well-springs of pity, but it is only the wants of others, and our concern for them that can reveal the depths. The wants of other people put us in possession of our best selves. The finest fiddle can only know its music through the scraping of the bow.

It was towards the end of December that a heavy rain had been followed by a keen and sudden frost so that the streets were like a sheet of glass. Our young minister was carefully making his way late in the evening to his lodgings, when out of the public house came a man who had scarcely reached the steps of the place when he fell heavily to the ground. Our young minister came up and found him quite unconscious with a wound on his head from which the blood flowed.

Soon two or three came up, and whilst one was sent for the doctor, the others bore him to the house where, in a couple of rooms, he lived with his wife and children. A wretched drunkard, he had pawned for drink almost all that could be pawned. When all was done that could be done at the time, the doctor turned to the young minister.

"There is no nurse to be got, and I am afraid his wife cannot manage it. She has a baby to see to. Everything depends upon these bandages being renewed constantly on his head. I don't see what we can do."

Then the man woke up in the minister. Off went his coat.

"Look here, Doctor, can you trust me?"

"Will you stay?"

"I will," said he. "Perhaps you will send somebody to my lodgings to say I shall not be home."

"Well," said the doctor, "I don't know yet how it will go with him. Very much will depend upon you."

The work was done carefully and well, but through the night came a frequent coughing from the room below; and now and then the voice of a child, as if ministering to some sick body.

In the morning the doctor came. "Now," said he, "you go home and get some rest. His wife can see to him through the day."

"Doctor," said the young minister, "I heard some one coughing badly during the night in the room below. Do you know who it is?"

"A sad case, indeed," said the doctor. "A young man, a very decent fellow, in consumption. He lost his wife some time ago, and has one little daughter of some thirteen or fourteen years. How on earth he lives I don't know. Could you call and see him? He used to belong to your Sunday School, and I am afraid nobody has been to look after him."

"Yes, I will see him as I go. I will come back again to-night."

"Well, yes, I am afraid I must depend on you. He is going on all right, but he needs carefully seeing to all the time."

Later the young minister stood at the door of the room below. He put his hand on his gold chain.

"Bless me," said he to himself. "How should I feel if I were in his place, hungry and starving, and a parson came in with his gold chain! His words of sympathy would choke me if this thing were dangling at his waistcoat." And he smiled as he thought of old Becky. Hastily he thrust it out of sight and knocked at the door.

It was opened noiselessly by a little girl, who put a finger on her lips. "He is asleep," she whispered.

He started as he looked at the white face, the poor little wasted frame so thinly clad, the large eager eyes that stared at him. "He would be glad to see you, sir, if you would call again. He has often wished that he could see a minister."

His voice choked with pity. "I will call again this evening," he said.

The breakfast finished, the first thing he did was to write a letter to his father. Might he sell the gold chain? Here were hungry folks needing a bit of food and a bit of fire. He went to bed, and worn out as he was, fell quickly asleep. But in his dreams he saw that poor little white face with the eager eyes.

When he came down late in the afternoon there waited a meal that was to serve both as dinner and tea.

"Mrs. Jenkins," he asked the landlady, "do you know a young man, in the house where I have been for the night, in consumption I fear, or threatened with it; and a little girl who looks after him?"

"Yes, yes, a very decent man—was a carpenter. He lost his wife some time ago, and has no one else to see to him but the little girl. He has been too ill to work. I am afraid he is very poor, and the child looks almost starved. In this cold weather and with his cough it must be dreadful for them."

The young minister pushed away the well-filled plate. "Can you keep that hot? Put it in a basin or something, and I will take it to them when I call."

"But you, sir?" said Mrs. Jenkins.

"Me! I can't look at it when I think of that little girl and her father. Here is a rice pudding for me. I think there will be enough for both of them."

Mercy is more than twice blessed. Mercy has a contagion that others catch. Mrs. Jenkins set the dinner in the oven, and then began to think what she could do. She sat for a moment, and the firelight glistened in her tears. She had lost a little girl some time before. The clothes had been sacredly kept, and seldom had she been able to look at them. But now, she said to herself, if her little daughter could but know, would it not make her glad to know that her things had gone to warm this poor child?

So our young minister, when he was ready to start, found Mrs. Jenkins with a large basket containing not only the dinner, but much more than that—a warm dress and underclothing, stockings, and a pair of boots.

"I am going with you," said she.

"But you must let me carry the basket," said he.

So they went on together, our fine gentleman proudly carrying the big basket on his arm. If old Becky could have seen him then how it would have set her heart singing!

The good work prospered in his hands. The man for whom he had cared through the night speedily recovered. That devotion had won his heart.

"If that is religion," said he, "that is the thing for me."

On a Sunday evening, at the close of the service, the two knelt together, and our young minister tasted the joy of leading a soul to Christ, that joy which once tasted is craved for ever afterwards. The man went forth to tell others what he had found, and soon was started a class of sturdy working men. The paper had gone from the pulpit, as well as the gold chain from his waistcoat. Out of the fulness of his heart his mouth spoke with the force of a living experience and a tender sympathy.

The sick carpenter did not linger long. The young minister was his constant visitor and interested others who did much for the man's comfort. When he passed away, Mrs. Jenkins took the daughter as a help in the house.

It was as the young minister sat at dinner one day that she ventured timidly to say, "May I tell you something, sir?"

"Certainly, my dear," said he, with his un-failing gentleness towards her. "What is it?"

"Do you know when you came to see my

father, and were so good to him, I used to pray every night and every morning that I might somehow become your little servant, and do nothing all my life but wait upon you, sir. And I am so glad God answered my prayer."

"So am I, my dear, so am I," said he.

It was with all confidence that I gave him the next Quarterly ticket to take to Becky. With a face full of sunshine, and a voice full of gladness, she told me of that second interview.

"Yes, he knocked at t' door. 'Come in,' says I, 'come in. Thee needn't knock. Thou art real welcome. Come in.' So he sits down and puts Quarterly Ticket on table.

"'Thou canst leave it this time, lad,' I says. 'Eh, I knowed the good Lord would mak' summat o' thee, when I heard tell how thou was finding out t' wants o' folks. I heard tell abaht gold chain and all. Lad, that was the most powerful sermon thou hast ever preached. *It made t' folks believe in thee.* And when they believe in t' man, they'll believe in t' message. It's like my old clock on t' wall, when t' works is reet it'll strike reet. God bless thee, lad, God bless thee. I'll keep prayin' for thee neet and morning as I said, I canna promise thee owt better.'"

“THOU FOOL!”

A FRIEND had dropped in to see me, and we sat together in my study. He was a little dapper gentleman who prided himself on the unfailing propriety of his speech and manner.

“What are you going to talk about on Sunday?” he asked.

“Not quite sure,” I said. “I am thinking of *Thou Fool*.”

He started.

“Really, my dear sir, you must pardon me, but you do use dreadfully strong language. Is it not offensive and lacking in courtesy? I do not think a minister of refinement would permit himself to be guilty of anything like that. I cannot help thinking it is ungentlemanly—yes, there is no other word for it—ungentlemanly.”

And as he rose to leave he repeated the last phrase—“ungentlemanly”—as if that were indeed the sum of all that one should avoid, the great offence of which one should never be guilty.

I turned to my desk again and settled the matter as to my text:

“THOU FOOL!”

I could not help feeling that there was much to be said for my friend's remarks. Certainly no man likes being called a fool, whoever or whatever he may be. Thomas Carlyle in his pessimism summed up the population of England as consisting of so many millions, “mostly fools.” Well, he might perhaps have left out the “mostly,” for in some things and some times the wisest and best of us find that it is horribly true. When a man calls another man a fool, this fact drives the other man to resent it, knowing it is true of both. And to say it is a sign of ill-will, of harsh and hasty temper. Folly itself lies at the bottom of it.

But what when God Almighty says, “Thou Fool”?

Then may a man well stay and listen. From the lips of the dread Judge these words have an awful meaning. Surely when He, before whom we must all appear to give an account of the deeds done in the body, says “*Thou Fool*,” we should be eager to know what can have provoked such words from His lips—“*Thou Fool!*”

Let us draw near to the Lord Jesus and hear the story which He tells. The ground of a certain man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, “What shall I do, because I have no room wherewith to bestow my fruits?” And he said, “This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.” And to put the story into a language

up to date, he said, "Then I will retire from business and enjoy myself."

May we venture to fill out the story of this successful merchant? He had many friends and neighbours, and all of them, alike in the Churches and out, spoke very highly of him as a prosperous man, industrious, quick-sighted, knowing when to sell and when to buy, always straightforward, never so far as we know doing anything that was mean. Fathers held him up to their sons as an example. And if he had any children of his own, the best people in the Churches hoped that there might be something more than an acquaintance with his family.

Fool? No, indeed—no such word was ever used of this shrewd and prosperous man. When he wanted more room for his business, what else, in the name of common sense, could he do but enlarge his premises? And when he had made a fortune, what could be wiser for him than to retire and enjoy himself? Surely, here is the last man in the world for any man to call a fool. He has earned what he got by industry and skill. Let him enjoy it.

AND GOD SAID, "THOU FOOL!"

* * * *

I had got thus far in thinking of my subject when I was called away to visit a sick body. It was a long walk, and I did not get back until supper-time. Then I went to my study intending to get on with my work. But the

hour was late, and I was tired and, like the prince of the Apostles when he went on the housetop to pray, I fell asleep. Let the preacher be pitiful to any of his congregation who should fall asleep *under* his sermon when he himself is guilty of going to sleep *over* it.

And, like St. Peter, sleeping, I dreamed.

I found myself invited as a guest at the house of this rich man. A servant in livery met me at the station and led me to a motor. The son, the only child of the rich man, sat as driver. He shook hands with me heartily, evidently a frank, good-hearted fellow. Then I sank down in the cushions of a most costly car, fitted with every luxury that could be devised for adding either to expenditure or indulgence. On the steps of the house the host came to greet me—a big, good-looking man, in evening dress, arrayed for dinner.

“ What do you think of it, sir ? ” the son asked, as he came and stood on the steps, and pointing to the car. “ Nothing finer to be had—cost over two thousand pounds.”

It was after a very sumptuous dinner that we sat in the smoking-room.

The butler came in.

“ Well, Pipkins, what is it ? ” asked my host.

Pipkins stood caressing his smooth chin over the white tie.

“ Miss Thompson called, sir, to ask for your subscription to the Foreign Missions.”

“ Really, there is no end to this sort of thing,” said the Squire, laying aside the cigar—and a very costly one it was. He took down the

Missionary Report. "Ten guineas, I see." And he wrote a cheque and addressed it to Miss Thompson. "Anyone else been, Pipkins?"

"Yes, sir. The superintendent minister wished me to remind you that he left the Report of the Worn-Out Ministers' Fund, and would call again for your subscription of one guinea."

"Well, well," said the host, annoyed, "do they think I am made of money?"

He dashed off another cheque. "Now, I do hope that is all, Pipkins?"

"Well, sir, the rector called to say that poor old Jones had fallen off the rick and broken his leg. They have taken him off to the hospital. The rector is trying to get some help for the wife and children."

"Jones, Jones—drunk, I s'pose. No, not a halfpenny. The rector is chairman of the Board of Guardians, and I pay the poor-rate. What is the good of it if it does not meet such a case as that? I don't like it, and you can tell the rector so."

We were seated again, and my host resumed his cigar.

"By the by," said he, "you are a bit of an artist, I believe. What do you think of that picture?" and he pointed to a large canvas, handsomely framed, that hung on the farther side of the room. "They say it is Smith's masterpiece. I gave a thousand guineas for it. It is worth fifteen hundred now, I am told."

I turned and looked at it, and said nothing.

But in my mind I was running through some calculations. Motor-car, two thousand ; House, grounds, gardens, servants, three, four, five thousand a year ; Foreign Missions, ten guineas ; Worn-Out Ministers' Fund, one guinea ; Poor Jones's wife and children—nothing. And it was as if I saw another Presence there—the sorrowful Christ, and from His lips came the words : " So is every one who is not rich towards God."

" Not rich—rich—rich—towards God." And I went over the words slowly and with awe, for the tone of that sorrowful voice seemed to linger in them, as a note of music lingers in a room. " Not rich—rich—rich—towards God."

Then in my dream suddenly the scene changed.

The stately house appeared a ruin.

The place was desolate—an awful gloom rested on all. Before me stood an old man, withered, trembling. •

" You don't remember me, sir ? " he asked.

I looked, and slowly recognised the butler.

" Why, are you Pipkins ? "

" I am, sir," said he. " Ah, the changes, the changes ! " And the old man wrung his hands.

" The Squire ? " I asked. " What has become of him ? "

" Dead, sir. He died suddenly, cut off amidst all the grandeur and glory of the place." The old man shook his head and repeated the word, "*Dead.*"

" And the son—what became of him ? "

" Ah ! a sad story, sir, a sad story. His money ruined him. Drink, gambling and his wild ways swallowed up all that was his of the property. He made away with himself in a fit of drunkenness. A terrible story."

" And the estate ? " I asked.

" It got into Chancery, sir, and never came out again. The place was stripped to pay the young master's debts. And then a lot of poor relations came claiming this and that. So here it is—going to rack and ruin."

And the old man shook his head sadly—
" Rack and ruin."

Then the gloom grew darker.

Out of the darkness came a voice. It was the voice of God :

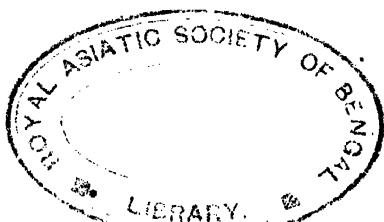
" THOU FOOL ! "

And again I heard the tones of that sorrowful voice—" So is everyone who is not rich—rich—rich—towards God."

“It is impossible to deny that Christ’s warnings and denunciations are mainly directed against wealth, and the desire for wealth, and the love of power which comes with wealth. This, too, is substantially the indictment of the prophets. Where has been the fire of prophetic indignation in the Church, which yet exists to represent Christ and the Bible!”—BISHOP GORE.

* * * *

The most awful thing that can befall any man is to become independent of God—and that is the peril of wealth.



VI

BECKY MURGATROYD GOES HOME

I LITTLE thought when the story of Becky was written—dear old Becky—that so soon she would be taken from us. In the spring of the year there came an epidemic of influenza, and among the many victims was Becky. Her constitution, toughened and hardened as it had been by her rough life, seemed for awhile to assure her recovery. But later came bronchitis, and although she might linger for some time, we felt there was little hope of her being restored to us.

I found a neighbour who was willing to go morning and evening to see to her comfort; but it was our young minister who did most for her. He had gone to the Sewing Meeting, and as he sat with the ladies at tea he made his appeal.

“I want some of you young ladies to volunteer for a bit of work—a week at a time—a bit of work that will do you good, and do good to somebody else. Now, who will volunteer for this service?”

“Oh, but you must tell us first what we shall have to do,” said one and another. “How do

we know whether we are able to do it if you do not tell us what it is ? ”

“ Well,” said he, “ I have faith enough in you to know that you can manage it if you will. Won’t you have faith enough in me to promise it, whatever it is ? ”

Then a bright, sunny-faced young girl looked up and laughed.

“ I will volunteer.”

Soon a group followed with a chorus, “ And I—and I ! ”

So the volunteers were won, and all waited eagerly to hear what it was they were to do.

“ Well, now,” he explained, “ the first thing is—can you cook things for an invalid—beef-tea, chicken-broth, jellies and custards, and all these sort of things ? ” And he waited for an answer.

“ I can try, at any rate,” said the merry-faced girl, who had been the first to volunteer.

“ We will manage it somehow,” said the others. “ Who is it for ? ”

“ Well, it is for a dear old friend of mine who is ill, and is very poor. I will tell you her name when I take you to see her, for there must be a formal introduction, you know.” Then he turned to the merry girl and said, “ You must take the first week, of course. I will call to-morrow at twelve o’clock, and we will go together. Mind the good things are ready.”

“ Oh, dear,” laughed the girl, “ that is short notice. But I will manage somehow. Twelve o’clock to-morrow.”

The next day the girl was waiting with a basket containing much more than had been asked for. There was a flask of beef-tea, a jelly, and custard and biscuits. There were some flowers beautifully arranged, and a bunch of grapes.

"I am going to take you to poor old Becky Murgatroyd," he explained, as they went together. "She does not need much, but I know it will be a joy to her to see you."

"I am sure I shall like to come," said the girl. "I am so glad you asked me."

So they reached Becky's cottage.

"I have brought a young lady to see you, Becky. She has some things that I hope you will relish, and she will read to you. I will come in later to see how you have got on together."

"Eh!" said Becky, "come thee here, my lass, come thee here, and let me have a look at thee." And Becky lifted herself on the pillow.

She took the girl's hand and looked into her merry face.

"Eh, thee art a bonnie lass. Bless thee, my bairn. And thou hast come to bring me thy dainties. It does me good to look at thy bonnie face. The great prophet Elijah had nought but t' ravens to bring him his vittles. Eh, if he had the likes of thee to bring them I reckon he'd have enjoyed them a deal more." And the old hand was laid upon the girl's. "It does me good to see thee, my bonnie lass. Bless thee!"

The girl's face was filled with joy at the greeting. Then she said, "But now you must not hinder me like this, you know. I've lots of things to do." She took off her hat and cloak, and brought a table beside the bed and set out the store of good things, and in the midst of them her dainty bunch of flowers.

"Eh, my lass, thou hast brought enough for a week," said old Becky, reaching her hand for the flowers.

"Well, you know, I'm coming every day for a week," laughed the girl, "unless you get tired of me before the week is over."

"Eh, God bless thee, my bonnie bairn. I canna thank thee."

The cup of beef-tea and a biscuit were almost all Becky could take.

"Oh," laughed the girl, "I shall think you don't like it unless you take a little of everything, you know."

So Becky had to take a teaspoonful of jelly and a teaspoonful of custard. "Just to taste it, lass," she said with a laugh. Then with the greatest relish she took some of the grapes.

The little meal was ended, and the table cleared. Again the old hand held the girl's in its feeble grasp, and looking into her face Becky could but keep saying, "Eh, my bonnie bairn. God bless thee. It does me good to look at thee."

"But I have not done my work yet!" laughed the girl. "He said I was to read to you—the young minister, I mean."

Even Becky's eyes were not so dim but that she saw a faint blush spread over the girl's face.

"Eh, so it's *his* doing and all, is it? Weel, God bless him, and bless thee, too." And for a minute Becky must have seen a little vision or dreamed a little dream. "A real bonnie pair," said she to herself.

Then, with the Bible on the table and her hand in Becky's, the girl turned to the chapter Becky had chosen—the ninety-first Psalm.

"He shall give His angels charge concerning thee," came the words tenderly spoken and with musical sweetness.

"Eh, my bonnie, bonnie bairn," said Becky, with tears in her eyes, and pressing the girl's hand. "I reckon He has sent one of them in thee."

The girl's tender heart was melted. She looked up with tears in her eyes, too, and then set her lips on Becky's forehead. "Oh, I am so glad, so very glad I came."

The chapter was finished.

"Now," said Becky, "now, my bonnie bairn, thee must pray with me."

"Oh," cried the girl, almost frightened, "I couldn't do that. I never prayed in my life—I mean out loud."

"Then we must pray together—thee and me. Dost mind how once all the great Apostles—Peter and John and James and all the rest—came asking the Lord Jesus to teach them to pray? And He said, 'When ye pray, say Our

Father.' We can stop there, for to my thinking there's everything in that—Our Father."

And 'Becky lay back on her pillows, as if resting and rejoicing in all that it meant to her. Then' with eyes aglow she sat up again.

"I must tell thee, my bonnie bairn, how I came to say it—and how thou canst begin to say it, too.

"Weel, it was in t' spring-time—a lovely day—and I was at work in t' fields. Eh, I can hear them now—how all t' birds were singing—the larks going up in t' blue sky, and a thrush were piping from top of an elm tree, and the cuckoos a-calling to each other; and in the wood the rooks was busy about t' young ones, putting in a sort o' bass to all the music. Eh, but it were grand to hear them all.

"And t' flowers—eh, the flowers. There was the scent of May in the air, and buttercups and daisies everywhere—God Himself must have looked down from Heaven, like it says in t' Bible—'Behold, it was very good.'

"But that weren't all. A young woman had come to work alongside o' me, and she brought her baby. She put it down in a mossy place in t' hedge, wrapped up in a shawl. And every now and then she'd turn her head to see t' bairn was all reet. And times she went back to look at it.

"Then it all come to me. I lifted mysen up from my work, and the beauty of it all filled my soul. 'Eh, Becky,' it seemed to say, 'Eh, Becky, dost know how the Heavenly Father loves thee?' And I thought how the Blessed

Lord Jesus sat on a hillside and told t' folks how the Heavenly Father fed the birds. It was like as if He was there still, and said that I was much more to the Heavenly Father than the birds. And how the Heavenly Father clothed the flowers with beauty, and that He would do much more for me than He could do for them.

"Then I watched t' mother go over to t' bairn, and I could hear the laugh of t' little one, and t' mother laughed back again. Eh, to think of it, my bonnie bairn—to think of it. I knew that was how the Heavenly Father cared for me—for me. Eh, my bonnie lass, it filled my soul to overflowing, like as if everything was full of it. The birds sang it, and the flowers looked up and breathed the sweetness of it. But most of all and best of all were t' bairn. 'My Father,' I says, 'and I am Thy bairn—Thine own bairn, that Thou dost love for Thine own. Eh, to think that I can lie down in Thy love, same as t' bairn in t' mother's arms—that I can look into Thy face and laugh with gladness, same as t' bairn on t' mother's knee.'

"Eh, I knew then what it meant in the story when prodigal come home to his father, and they began to be merry. He had put t' best robe about me, same as He'd give to the flowers; and music in my soul same as He'd give the birds. And I could take all His love for my own same as t' bairn at t' mother's breast."

Then Becky lay back on her pillow at rest, as if compassed with those arms of love.

There was silence for a while ; their hands clasped.

"Now we will say it together," said Becky presently. And the tremulous voice of Becky and the music of the girl's voice joined in glad utterance—"Our Father." And to the happy girl it became as to Becky a living reality—a love shed abroad in the heart—a love to rest in and rejoice in—"Our Father."

So the afternoon passed.

"Now I must go," said the girl. "I shall come again to-morrow."

Becky drew her down at her side. "Eh, my bonnie bairn," and she stroked the face that lay on the pillow beside her, "I am loath to let thee go."

"But I shall come again to-morrow, you know," said the girl.

"To-morrow"—and the word was spoken doubtfully. Was there a foreboding of the end? "To-morrow—weel, if I do not see thee again down here, I shall look for thee among t' angels. I shall know thee, my bairn, my bonnie bairn."

Early the next morning the doctor was sent for. But it was all over—a sudden heart failure, and then the end. Becky, dear old Becky, had gone home.

* * * *

"I cannot tell you how glad I am that you asked me to go and see her," said the girl, as

she and the young minister walked back from the funeral. "I shall never lose the blessing I found at her bedside. And she called me her bairn, her own bonnie bairn."

"Well, I think I shall call you Becky's bairn now," said he.

"Do—do—I should like nothing half so well," said she.

* * * *

But the story of Becky would be incomplete unless I told of what she did for the doctor.

He was a big, sturdy man, somewhat rough in his manner, but with a heart full of tenderness. He often came in to see me for a chat, and was always welcome. Liked by everybody, he was loved, almost adored by the poor.

"I stop *your* indulgences when you're ill, you well-to-do folks. You get too many of them. But I pile them up on poor folks when they are bad, because they can't get them at any other time," he said to me one day.

"Sometimes they must be almost sorry to get better," I laughed, for everybody knew they came from him, and he could afford it—a man independent of his practice.

"I like that young minister of yours," he said to me. "He is more than a parson—he is a *man*. I shall come and hear him preach some day."

That was a new thing indeed for the doctor. Nobody had seen him in Church or Chapel.

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He was too busy for that, he said. But now it came about that on two or three occasions he slipped into my pew when our young minister was in the pulpit.

It was Becky, however, who had most to do with the change that came over him. Always shy and reserved in speaking of religion, it was when we sat talking of Becky that he told me the story.

"It was not long before the end came that I sat at her bedside. 'Doctor,' said she, 'I've been thinking abaht thee—thinking a deal abaht thee, I have. Now, if I was out on t' moors in t' dark and storm trying to find my way home, and thou wert to come along, why, thou wouldst stop car and call out to me, "Here, Becky, let me give thee a lift!" And thou wouldst wrap rug round me and mak' me so comfortable as could be. "I'll have thee home in a jiffey!" thee'd say. And thou wouldst go out o' thy way a mile or happen a couple o' miles to get me there!'

"Of course I would, Becky, and glad to do it for you.'

"Weel, now, Doctor, when some poor body is getting to the end of the journey, and is trying, maybe in the dark, to find the right road, wouldn't it be just a grand thing if thou couldst give them a lift homeward and heavenward—wouldn't it? And thou often hast t' chance o' doing it.'

Oh, but, I said, 'that isn't in my line. They would ay to me, "Physician, heal thyself."'

“ ‘Nay, nay, I can tell thee summat better to say than that. Go to the Good Physician to heal thee, and then tell folks what He has done for thee, same as folks tell what thou hast done for them. It is a terrible thing to have the chance o’ doing it, and leaving it undone. Think abaht it, Doctor—aye, and pray abaht it.’

“ Well I could not get away from dear old Becky’s words. They stuck to me. And one night when your young minister was preaching I made up my mind and got, by God’s grace, into the right road. And many a poor soul will have reason to bless God for Becky’s words to me.”

It was from the night nurse at the Work-house Infirmary that I heard the story of what the doctor was doing.

“ A drunken man, staggering along the road, had reeled in front of a motor, and had been knocked down and seriously injured. The doctor came and did all that he could for him, and then sat by his bedside for an hour or two. I was moving quietly about when I saw that the man had recovered consciousness.

“ Then very quietly and gently the doctor bent over him.

“ ‘You have not long to live,’ he said, ‘and I want you to listen whilst I try to tell you of the Saviour Jesus Christ.’

“ The man turned his face away. ‘It’s no good,’ he said. ‘I have made just an awful mess of my life—drink—drink—don’t talk to a man like me.’

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"But the doctor went on. 'Now, listen to the story of one who had made a mess of his life—had spent all in riotous living.'

" 'That's just myself,' the man groaned.

" 'Well, this man said, "I will arise and go to my father."'

"The man turned and listened eagerly.

"The doctor went on. "'And when he was yet a great way off his father saw him and had compassion, and ran, and kissed him.'" And what do you think the prodigal said?'

" 'Eh, I mind, I mind—my mither used to read me the story long ago. He said, "I am not worthy to be called thy son."'

"Then the doctor went on again. 'But the father said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." Now that is how God loves *you*—and what He longs to do for *you*.'

"The man put out his hand and laid it in the doctor's hand.

" 'Man—is it true—is it true?'

" 'It is what the Lord Jesus said. And it is what your mother believed.'

"So he lay—his hand in the doctor's hand.

"Gradually, as I watched, a change came over his face. It was as if transfigured. And with his failing breath he muttered the words—broken as he gasped—"Had—compassion—on—him—and—fell—on his neck—and—kissed him."'

"There was silence for a few minutes. And the doctor said, 'He is gone.'"

So does dear old Becky's influence live amongst us still.

* * * *

P.S.—I have just heard that our young minister has become engaged to "Becky's bairn."

VII

A LIAR

AN old college chum of mine had come to spend a day with me. It was long since we met, and we had many things to talk of as we sat together. He was stationed in a circuit that had come to have a bad name in the District—a circuit to which no man would go if he could help it; and from which he got away as soon as he could. For years things had not only been at a standstill, but steadily going down. In the Synod it was a storm centre. The plain words of the Chairman and the inquiry of Secretaries were met with many replies from the lay representatives of the circuit.

The Chairman of the District, almost in despair, had asked my friend to tackle it as a kind of forlorn hope—and he had consented. He rather liked a fight—a big fellow, utterly fearless, who could put on a hippopotamus hide and defy abuse, and sneer, and sarcasm. Himself of a hot temper and quick-witted, he could give as good as he got, and rather better.

Then came tidings of improvement. Things had altered. The place was prospering and numbers were added to the Church. It seemed

hard to believe. Could any good thing come out of Nazareth?

Naturally enough our talk turned to such a surprising change.

"How did you manage it?" I asked.

Then he told me as good a story as I have heard for many a day.

"As soon as I got there," said he, "I felt there was an utter stagnation. Religiously the place was dead. There was no sign in service or anywhere else of the presence of God—scarcely any interest, much less enthusiasm. The first Quarterly Meeting was just a bitter fault-finding—the only thing in which they were united was in attacking the minister.

"I had been speaking of the sad condition of things when the leading member of the place, an old man who had been circuit steward for twenty years or more, got up with a growl.

"What else can you expect when the Conference treats us as it does? Find a man that isn't good enough for anywhere else, and they'll send him to us. And now *you've* come!"

"Well, you have got as good as you deserve," I flung out, "and I'm more sorry for the minister than for you."

"You know I'm a hot-tempered man, and I certainly was roused. I never found it so hard to pronounce the Benediction as I did after that meeting. It seemed almost a mockery to talk of the peace of God. I thought of St. Paul's words to the troublesome Galatians: If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

"I sat late that night in my study, very angry, and muttered to myself, 'A set of wild beasts.' I will preach next Sunday and tell them some plain truths. I will give it them as hot and strong as I can make it.' Then I turned to St. John's Epistle: *If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.* These two words will do well—*A Liar.* There is my text, anyhow. Then I went to bed.

"I confess I hurried from the breakfast-table next morning eager to begin. I flung off my coat and sat down in my shirt sleeves. My fists were clenched, my teeth were set. 'There has to be a fight,' I said, 'and a pretty stiff one, too, but there is no help for it.'

"I went over the members of the congregation, and recalled what I had gathered of feud and quarrel and long sources of ill-will.

"The old man who had flung out his angry words at me—a martyr to the gout, that added to his irritability—had quarrelled with his Methodist neighbour, whose fowls had found their way through a broken fence and scratched up the garden beds. He wrote an angry letter, threatening all sorts of damages unless the fence were repaired. The answer came back that the fence belonged to him, and he must repair it for himself. The fence had been repaired by the old man, but the bill was sent to his neighbour. Then the matter got into the lawyer's hands, and then into the county court. The case had gone against the old man and there were law costs to be paid, and henceforth an angry bitterness. I had got to know the neighbour,

a quiet, decent man, the most intelligent member of my congregation, who himself would gladly have ended the dispute if any approach had been made to him.

"Then there was the man at the boot and shoe shop—a local preacher—who threatened to withdraw his name from the Plan because I had refused to appoint him to the town pulpit.

"‘And there’s another thing,’ he had said to me angrily, ‘I work and contribute to keep up Methodism, and I expect the Methodists to deal with me before going anywhere else. I’ve got a claim on them, that’s what I say.’

"‘And what I say is that it’s *rubbish*; downright nonsense. Nobody but a fool would talk like that,’ I said, for I was too vexed to check the words that came to my tongue.

"‘You say that—you! And I help to keep you in the bread you eat and the house you live in!’ He was furious.

"‘Yes, I say that, and I mean it. Do you go to the wholesale manufacturer who is a Methodist, or do you go where you can get the best goods at the most reasonable rate?’

"‘That’s different,’ he snapped.

"‘No, it isn’t,’ I said. ‘It’s just the same.’

"Well, the fire was not put out by that encounter. The furnace was only heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated.

"In another case there was a family feud that had gone on for years over a great-uncle’s will, which, on one side, was held to be the result of undue influence, and neither father nor mother nor any of the children in the one

family would speak to the family of the other.

"I sat and recalled one and another, and saw that my work was cut out for me. It was time for somebody to say some plain things about it, cost what it might. I was ready for it, and fiercely I headed my manuscript with the text :

"A LIAR."

Then I took up the Bible and turned over its pages. Before me, without seeing it, was the Hymn of Love—I Corinthians xiii. : Love suffereth long and is kind.

"I started. The words seemed to be on fire and burned into my soul. They seemed to take shape, and it was as if one stood before me as of old when Nathan the prophet rose before David with pointed finger and look as of a lightning flash, and thundered, Thou art the man.

"I was broken—crushed—overwhelmed. God was in that place. It was His voice that spoke to me—to me : *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.* I had been hard and bitter. I had flung anger for their anger : contempt for their contempt : hatred for their hatred. I fell on my knees and poured my soul before God in an agony of prayer. How long I knelt I don't know, but I rose from my knees to feel that the fight was over. The fierceness was gone, and there came to me a great spirit of love and yearning helpfulness. It was really as if I had become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Time is nothing when God begins to work a

miracle—and it was a miracle and nothing less that was wrought in me, as complete as it was sudden. I was a wonder to myself. There is no other word for it—a new creature in Christ Jesus.

“I seemed now to see what to do: my way was plain. It was as if the Spirit of Love was the Spirit of Wisdom too. I felt carried away by a force that was not of myself, but of the Spirit that possessed me.

“First I went to the house of my grumpy old friend, who seemed the bitterest and surliest of them all. I found him sitting in the parlour, his foot propped up on a stool, wrapped round with cotton wool, and covered with a shawl. The excitement of the meeting had brought on a fierce attack of the old enemy.

“‘I suppose you’ve called to talk about that meeting yesterday,’ he began, in his grumpiest tone.

“ (Hurried as I had been I yet had managed to hit upon my method.)

“‘No,’ I said, as pleasantly as I could, ‘I want you to be good enough to let me see your chrysanthemums.’

“I had heard that his hobby was flowers, and that he had skilfully managed to produce some really wonderful blooms. His face changed.

“‘Of course, of course,’ he said. And the tone of his voice was very different. ‘They are in there. Sorry I can’t come with you.’ And he pointed to a glass door that led into a greenhouse.

“I was honest in my utterances as I went

from one to another. 'Wonderful—wonderful—I never saw anything like it.'

"I heard the old man's appreciation of my praise. 'They are fine, aren't they?' he said. 'I'll give you one of them if you like.'

"I had come back again. 'It is very good of you, and I shall treasure it, I assure you; but will you let it be where it is for you to look after it for me?'

"He hesitated. 'Yes—yes. I will remember it is yours, and take extra care of it.'

"Then I sat down by his side, and ventured to lay my hand on his.

"'Do you know why I have called to see you?'

"'I thought you came to see the flowers.'

"'So I did—but I want you to help me.'

"I am afraid he took it as an appeal for a subscription, he had been so used to that, and his face hardened again.

"'Yes, I want you to help me,' I went on. 'At the meeting last night I said some bitter things—some things that were lacking in love. I want you to forgive me. And I want you to help me not to say things like that again.'

"His lips quivered, and the tears crept into his eyes. 'I will help you if—if—you will help me.'

"Our hands clasped—and our eyes met.

"'Well, now, shall we two agree that, God helping us, we will try to live a life of love and glad helpfulness?'

"We sat in silence for a while, but the pressure of his hand on mine meant more than words.

"Then I fell on my knees at his side and poured out my soul's confession. My voice was choked with feeling, and it was hard to get out the words, but I knew that the Spirit of God was pleading within us both for the love that was coming—indeed, had come.

"Oh, the change on the old man's face, the grip of the hand, the tears of joy that streamed down his cheeks.

" 'Well, father,' I said, 'father, pray for me and I will pray for you—and we will help each other.'

" 'God bless you, my son, God bless you,' said the old man.

"I had got to the door when I turned back again.

" 'May I do what I like with the lovely flower you have given me?' I asked.

" 'Of course—of course; it is yours to do what you like with.'

" 'Then will you let me take it to the neighbour next door, with your kind regards? It will be a beginning, won't it?'

"There was a moment's hesitancy—a conflict that was soon ended. Then he laughed. 'Yes—yes; do. It will be a beginning. And with my kind regards.'

"So I hurried to the neighbour next door, and set the flower before him.

" 'What do you think of that?' I asked. 'Fine, isn't it?'

" 'Yes, very fine. Has he really given it to you?' For he knew the only place from whence it could come.

“ ‘No, no,’ I said, ‘not to me. He has sent it to you with his kind regards.’

“ ‘Sent it to *me*—to *me*?’

“ ‘Yes, to you—and with his kind regards. He says it is a sort of a beginning; but I think he means an ending, too. Write him a letter—or go in to thank him.’

“ ‘I will—I will. I have wanted to have done with this wretched quarrel long ago.’

“ And so that feud ended.

“ I tell you I could scarcely keep from shouting my praise to God as I went along the road and so home to dinner.

“ Later I called on my friend at the boot and shoe shop. His manner was not pleasant by any means. I managed to mend matters by choosing a pair of boots of which I was in need.

“ That over, I sat down at his counter.

“ ‘Look here,’ I said, ‘I want you to help me. It is a very particular matter, and the success of what I am going to do will depend much on your part in it.’

“ I was sincere enough, but such pre-eminence was to him a morsel that he enjoyed.

“ ‘I am going to have a praise meeting next Wednesday week, and I shall ask you to speak. You and I will have to get ready for it, and by God’s help we shall make a success of it. Now I will tell you what I am going to do. I am going to say to myself every night and every morning: Oh, God, how much have I got that Thou couldst take away! And I am going to run over all I can think of. Eyes,

ears and reason, health, home, the Heavenly Father's care and love—the gift of the glorious Saviour and of the Blessed Spirit. 'Now I want you to do the same thing when you get up in the morning and when you lie down at night. And tell them at the praise meeting what you are doing and how you get on.'

"He rose to it at once. 'Fine, fine,' he said, thinking more perhaps of the chance of the speech than of what it all meant, and little dreaming what it was going to do for him.

"Yet remained the other two—and I felt that this was altogether a more difficult matter. However, my way opened before me as if a Spirit of Wisdom had come with the Spirit of Love—the Love that never faileth. So I called upon one of them and asked if he would be good enough to come to tea with me. He would be rendering a great service if he would, I said, and I should feel much obliged. Then I made my way to the other, and he, too, promised to come. They arrived, and were startled to find each other sitting at the table together, although neither had spoken to the other. It was a stiff and formal time, and I had as much as I could do to talk of all sorts of commonplace things. After tea I began. 'Now, gentlemen, draw your chairs up to the fire.'

"I need not repeat all I said—it was to the effect that the work of God was at a standstill; that there was a spirit among us chilling, killing the holy influences; that God would have us prosperous, happy, blest; that it was

an awful responsibility to check and thwart the Spirit of God—an awful thing for anyone to have to settle when he came to stand at the Judgment Seat. I spoke out of the fullness of my heart. ‘Now I want your help,’ I pleaded. ‘I want you to have done with this old feud. For the sake of God, for the sake of His glory! How could the outsider believe in our religion if in the church we are at strife with one another?’ Then I rose, and looking from one to the other, I said, ‘Will you kneel with me in prayer?’ And again I poured out my heart before God. When we rose it was enough. Their hands met. Tears were in the eyes of each; and in mine too.

“‘I am going to have a praise meeting on Wednesday week. Will you come and join it?’

“Well, the praise meeting was a glorious time. The hymns went grandly. My shoe-shop friend had, I think, prepared a speech, but I don’t think he delivered it. He began with two verses of the hymn :

“ Oh, bless the Lord, my soul,
Let all within me join :
And aid my tongue to bless His name
Whose favours are divine.”

• “ Oh, bless the Lord, my soul,
Nor let his mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die.”

Then he went on : ‘My friends—I am ashamed of myself—ashamed. I seem to have forgotten all His benefits. But—but’—and his voice

broke so that he could scarcely speak for a moment or two—'but—it has come—it has come—the spirit of praise.' And he startled the congregation with a shout of 'Glory!'

"My old friend had managed to creep up on a couple of sticks. He spoke with a glow and a gladness that set every heart singing. He told of what his religion had been to him years before, a power of God in his life, his work, and a power unto salvation of those about him. 'Somehow,' said he, 'it had gone—the peace, and joy, the sunshine and song of it all had gone. But it has come back again,' he cried. 'I don't want to go to heaven as long as I can find heaven down here—yet I am ready to cry, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.'

"There was a lull in the speaking. Then one rose and said only, 'Praise God!'—and he sat down again in the midst of his family. Another rose, his voice choked with emotion as he said: 'Will you praise God for what he has done for me?' And we did, with a hymn that swept the place with rapture.

"From that day we never looked back. Conversions began amongst us, and the two families that had been so long at enmity met together as members of the church, and all joined my class—and became workers in the Sunday School. And later two of the cousins have become engaged, and I am to marry them."

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“ Well, that is the story,” said my friend. “ I never preached the sermon on the text I had written. My soul was filled with wondering, adoring praise. You know,” he finished, “ a man does not like being called a liar. It is a terrible word that I had prepared for others, little thinking it should come to me as it did—a sort of boomerang. Yes—it came straight back with a force that crushed me—*If a man say I love God, and hate his brother—he is a liar.*”

VIII

AN OLD MAN'S TALE

IT was in Wales, in the midst of some of its loveliest scenery. I was seated on a fallen fir tree, a magnificent specimen that some fierce gale had uprooted from the rocky ridge on which it stood. In front of me rose the slopes of Cader Idris. The river Mawddwy gleamed all in silver in the sunshine; and down the valley between hills of heather and gorse I caught a glimpse of the sea. Just below me a heron stood motionless in the stream, and the water-fowl swam out from the bulrushes. Absorbed and charmed by the beauty of it all, I did not notice that an old man had seated himself on the fir tree until his greeting startled me.

"A grand bit of scenery," said he, with a Welsh accent; "indeed, indeed, it is very fine."

I was unwilling to have the solitude thus broken, and somewhat reluctantly turned to respond to his greeting. He came nearer me.

"You are not a Welshman?"

"No," said I.

"Ah!" said he, "it is a pity—a pity."

"Do you think one need be Welsh to enjoy its scenery?"

"Well," he replied, with a charming gentleness, "you need be a Welshman to claim it as your own."

"Not a bit of it," I laughed; "not a bit of it. The beauty and glory of God's sun and God's mountains and God's fair world are for all men alike. He has no favourites except that we are all His favourites."

He was silent for a while, thrusting his stick into the peaty soil. Then, as he turned to me, his face shone.

"Indeed, indeed, it is true, gloriously true—we are all His favourites. It is a strange tale how I came to find it."

Deep calleth unto deep. At once I felt that flowing of soul which is the true communion. The doors of the innermost heart are opened, and we find ourselves in the banqueting chamber where the Blessed Master ever seeks to enter. The silence itself was a conversation, a flowing together, as when two streams meet. He repeated the words: "*We are all His favourites.*" The glow of his face and the gladness of his tone told of the depths from which the utterance came. Very quickly we were talking of things most sacred, most Divine; and he told how he came to know God as his own.

"My father was a Calvinistic preacher of the old school and the old style," he began, "a great preacher. I have seen him caught by the gale of the *Hwyl*, as we call it, until the congregation was swayed like a field of

corn, and the excitement broke out in a great shout: *Gogoniant*, Glory! A man most gentle in everything else, it was strange to me as a lad how fierce and ferocious he became in religious discussion."

He was silent for a while.

"It is strange, is it not, very strange, that the worst side of a man so often comes out when he argues about religion—intolerant, utterly uncharitable, blind to any view but his own." Again he paused for a moment. "Was it so in the early days with the Apostle John, the Apostle of love, who was aforetime the Son of Thunder? I have sometimes wondered if the sight of the crucifixion of the Saviour melted and subdued him into a lifelong tenderness. The poet Wordsworth seems to have undergone a similar change by the sight of the horrors of the French Revolution. The fierce revolutionist became the gentle high priest of nature."

I must not linger over the asides with which the old man interrupted his story. They were frequent and full of interest, and very reluctantly I must omit them.

Again he went on. "My mother was one of the sweetest and gentlest women God ever made. I was the only son, and under such influences could scarcely fail to have the matter of religion continually in my thoughts. It controlled my earliest life. All I did was shaped by the one great longing that I might be one of the elect. The awful alternative was ever before me—an eternity of Hell!

How vividly my father pictured it ; and how it burned its way into my childish imagination and haunted my dreams ! To me the Almighty was a consuming fire. How strange it seemed that at the breakfast table we were all so happy, and there was such a kindness over all. Then came the family prayer, and it was as if a thunder-cloud had blotted out the sunshine. It was a horrible confession of such iniquity as I never could understand in such dear, good souls as they were. It was only to God that they must come with groans ! It was only before Him that they were awful transgressors, snatched as brands from the burning. So I grew up a lad of some eight or nine years. I had never done anything consciously wrong. My father would have kept me from it, even if my heart had prompted it. Then came the event of my life that wrought the great change." The old man paused. "I am talking a great deal about myself when perhaps I should be better listening to you."

"Do go on," I entreated. "I have seldom heard a story that has interested me more deeply."

"Well, as a boy I was very fond of reading, and had dipped into most of the books in my father's little library—mostly treatises of Calvinistic theology—and dull reading it was. But one day I came across Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress.' It was illustrated ; and nothing could have been more dreadful than those pictures—a grim giant pope sat under a tree

biting his nails ; Apollyon stood with a fiery dart against a background of thunder and lightning." The old man smiled in the midst of his narrative. " Good John Bunyan would have been amazed if he had dreamed what the book, which has been blest to so many thousands of souls, did for me !

" A life of John Bunyan was bound up with the volume, and it was that which arrested me. There were extracts from his own writings that graphically told of his early life—a *profane tinker*.

" So I thought this was the way, the only way for me to find what he found. How could I escape from the City of Destruction unless I had lived in it ? And how could I live in it ? That was the great question that filled my thoughts. It was a revelation. My mind was made up—I *would be a profane tinker*.

" Cautiously I set about it.

" ' Father,' I asked, ' what is *profane* ? '

" ' Oh,' said he, ' taking God's name in vain.'

" Happily I did not know what that meant, and so escaped that evil. But a tinker ! I took the book to my mother. ' I want you to tell me what a tinker is, mother.'

" ' Oh, a sort of gipsy, you know,' said she. ' They have no home, but wander about and set up a tent in the lanes and woods, where they light their fire and cook their food. I am afraid they are not always honest. Sometimes I have missed some of my fowls when they have been about, and I think they must

have taken them. Sometimes they come mending kettles and pans.'

"That was enough. I would be a tinker, like John Bunyan. So I, too, might live in the City of Destruction and escape from it as he did. Eagerly I waited and watched until one day I found an encampment of gipsies not far from our house. I had finished my supper and gone up to bed. Then I stole down and slipped out at the back door as quietly as I could, and hurried away to the gipsies. A tall man had just come back with a hare that he had snared. A woman was busy about the crock that hung over the fire of sticks. Three or four children gathered about her as I burst upon them.

" 'Please, sir,' I said, 'I want to be a gipsy.'

"He stared at me. 'It costs money, it does, to be a gipsy. Have you got any?'

"Alas! I had no money, and I shook my head sadly.

" 'Have you had any supper?'

" 'Yes,' I said. 'I have had my supper.'

" 'A good thing too,' said he, 'for there isn't too much of it.' Then he looked at me from head to foot, and turned to the woman. 'Let him take off his clothes and lie down on the straw, and put the sheepskin over him.'

"I was going to say my prayers before I undressed, but I remembered that I was in the City of Destruction, and, of course, nobody prayed there.

"I thought of my father and mother, and wondered if they would miss me. Yet what

was that compared to their joy in finding me one day escaped and saved like John Bunyan? So I lay down, and was soon fast asleep.

"I woke the next morning to find the gipsies had gone, tent and all, and even the sheepskin with which they had covered me. Cold and numb, I stirred to find my clothes had been stolen, and by my side lay an old smock frock and a tattered pair of trousers that I had seen on one of the lads.

"What was I to do? It was very early in the morning when I hurried home and knocked at the door, which was still locked. Later my mother had come down and found me lying faint on the doorstep. I came to myself in my warm bed, with my mother sitting holding my hand, and my father kneeling at the bedside in prayer.

"Then I sat up and sobbed it all out—how I had tried to be a profane tinker like John Bunyan, and wanted to live in the City of Destruction, that I might escape and find what Bunyan found.

"My father stood bewildered, as if the thing were beyond his understanding. It was my mother who comforted me.

"As I leaned against her side she read to me the words of the Lord Jesus on the Mount:

"Then she talked to me as I had never heard her talk before. There was a look in her face such as I had never seen. It was as if she had two chambers in her soul—one where she kept what she *ought* to believe; and one of nature—her own nature and its communion with the

nature of God's world. In one was the religion of her creed, the religion of my father's sermons and prayers, where she sang a doleful hymn about 'God's frowning face.' But now there opened to me a chamber of her own nature that faced the sunny south, where the birds sang and the flowers bloomed, and God was the Father-God with a mother's heart. All that my mother was to me God was to her. Only that which was most gracious and beautiful and altogether lovely could enter there. Yes, it was indeed as if there were the God of her creed, and the God Whom her own tender love had revealed to her, for *he that loveth knoweth God.*

"The exposure of the night and the excitement had left me with a feverish chill, and I leaned against her as she spoke most tenderly.

" 'No, no, my son. We need not enter the City of Destruction to find the Father,' said she. 'Go forth and sit on the hillside, and ask the Blessed Lord to come and talk to you as He came of old. He will teach you of the love of God as He taught them, in the flowers, and the birds. And He will ~~show~~ you to see Him in my love to you.' And again she repeated to me the words that have become sacred to me as the great revelation—*the Father-God with a mother's heart.*"

There was a long silence. Then the old man finished his story.

"I come here still on the hillside, and find

the Blessed Lord waiting for me. I hear the great love of the Father sung by the birds, and their music sets my heart singing too. And the flowers breathe the fragrance of His love into my soul. I find, above all, the memory of my mother's love comes to fill me with a blessed assurance—*your Heavenly Father careth for you*. Yes, it is true, gloriously true. He has no favourites except that we are all His favourites."

IX

THE SAVED SOUL THAT IS LOST

A CORNISH GILLYFLOWER

A FRIEND had sent me an apple—a Cornish gillyflower—a variety now almost extinct; for of species, alas, like some of my books, we have to say, “They have their day and cease to be.” I could see my old friends, the farmer and his wife, from whom it had come—he with a face ruddy and round, as one of his own quarrendens; she with a face like a russet, rich, brown and wrinkled because it was ripe.

The curious law of association led me to a story that came back from long ago—too quaint to be forgotten. A young man, whose father was stationed at Rochester, sent a strange parcel to a friend of his in London. In it were an apple from a Kentish orchard; a skull; and a small pocket Bible. Here were three subjects thrust upon him for meditation—an apple, that he might think of the fall of man; a skull, that he might think of man’s mortality; a Bible, that he might learn of man’s redemption. In the Bible was this inscription: “To W. H. Rule, with R. Treffry’s love and best wishes.

Let him read the book with care ; pause frequently, consider seriously, and pray fervently ; and he will find it the power of God to salvation.” “ This oddly assorted present,” wrote Dr. Rule, in his recollections, “ had been preceded by a letter wherein my friend informed me of his conversion to God ; and this gift of a Bible decided me to read again the sacred volume for his sake. I did so, and very soon was reading it for my own.”

But to return to my Cornish gillyflower. It was long since I had tasted one. So I peeled it carefully, and cut it. Bah ! At the heart of it lay a wretched grub that spread rottenness through it all and I flung it down.

I thought of the blossom that had come in May, a dainty bloom of pink and white. Some creature had settled on it for a moment and left a tiny speck. Then drinking the rain and sunshine of heaven, the blossom grew into an apple. It hung as fair in outward seeming as any. But at its heart was the grub that turned it into rottenness.

Then it was that I recalled some words I had read lately in John Wesley's sermons—words that arrested and amazed me. Christianity has in it the elements of its own destruction. A thing startling, terrible. Could it be true ? Is not Christianity mighty with the might of the Almighty—defiant alike of world, and flesh, and devil ? Is it not that against which the gates of hell cannot prevail ? Yet within it the elements of its own destruction !

And there came the vivid illustration—my gillyflower with the grub at its core—*rotten*.

WHAT THE LORD JESUS SAID

He that saveth his soul shall lose it. So is it in the marginal reference of the Revised Version.

Whosoever would save his soul would lose it. Let us set before us the occasion on which it was spoken. The Lord Jesus had told His disciples how that He must go up to Jerusalem, to be betrayed, to be spat upon, to be scourged, to be killed.

Then Peter, thinking only that Christ had come to restore again the kingdom of Israel, sprang up and laid that irreverent hand upon Him, "took hold of Him and began to rebuke Him." We read but a little later that Jesus rebuked the devil. Think, then, of Peter rebuking the Lord! And when Jesus had looked round about Him with indignation, He flung at Peter those terrible words—*Get thee hence, Satan . . . He who saveth his soul shall lose it.*

There it is. Salvation is ours only in proportion as we die to ourselves and give ourselves away in love. Trace our holy religion to its source, its spring, and we find it in the heart of the Eternal Father. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Be sure of this our religion is not of God unless it shapes itself after the pattern seen in the Mount. Loved with a love so wonderful, redeemed at a cost so infinite there is but one proof of our

religion that can suffice—hereby perceive we the love of God that He laid down His life for us. Then, what follows, irresistibly, of necessity? We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

As long as we stop short of that, what is our religion but an aggravated selfishness—saving our souls and going to heaven when we die? So often it is that and nothing more. And there stands the great demand and command—that we lay down our lives for our brothers. Alas, our very religion may but intensify the selfishness from which the Lord Jesus came to save us. The urgency of the appeal to men to seek their salvation, and the promises of religion, can scarcely fail to minister to our selfishness unless it leads to a great and glad surrender of ourselves in loving sacrifice to those about us.

How can we know the Fatherhood of God except as it leads us into true brotherliness with all men? He that loveth not his brother, what can he know of God's love to him? There is the element of destruction in our Christianity. There is the grub that turns our religion into rottenness. He that saveth his soul shall lose it. He who gives his soul away in love shall find it.

Pray God, man, with all the soul that is in us, to be saved from the selfishness of our salvation.

MOSES AND PAUL

Here are the two greatest men in the Bible—in the Old Testament, Moses, the man of

God ;' in the New Testament, St. Paul. Once, intimates in their religion ; later, far apart in many things. Moses laying down the Levitical Law with its strict injunctions as to minute observances, after added to until they became a yoke grievous to be borne. Saul, once a Pharisee of the Pharisees, fiercely exact in obedience to every jot and tittle of the law—later St. Paul, with his great declaration of justification by faith : contending at the risk of his life and beset by every peril, to free the Christian converts from the tyranny of these observances.

Yet Moses and St. Paul meet at one point. Moses, for the people's sake, prays that he may be blotted out of the Book of Life. St. Paul can wish himself accursed for his brother's sake.

Think of it soberly, solemnly—the Son of God is made a curse for us : and the two greatest men in the Church's history are willing to be accursed for the people's sake ! Alas, we turn to ourselves, and what do we find ? So often, so very often, only a blind selfishness that is content to sing :

- “ Nothing is worth a thought beneath,
But how I may escape the death
- That never, never dies.”

There is an exhaustive emphasis on that capital I. That, and that only, the one concern of our thought, of our prayer, of our hope, of our salvation. Surely this is the truth that needs to be burned into our very soul. What

is to-day the supreme hindrance to the triumph of Christianity? Put your finger right on it. Contentment with a personal salvation. There is the element of its destruction—the grub at the core.

Be sure of this—the religion that does not save a man out of selfishness into love will never save him out of hell into heaven. Whatever his creed, his belief, whatever his Sunday services, prayers, hymns—*he that loveth not abideth in death*. Love is more than the perfect tense of the verb to live—it is the only tense. He that loveth not, liveth not. This is St. Paul's religion—he died to himself that he might live. I live, yet not I. That "I" is crucified with Christ, that Christ may live over again His life of love.

It is all summed up in that word—The Church which is His body. My body is the means by which my spirit communicates with the world. I may have a thought in my mind, but what is it to anyone until my tongue utters it? I may have a purpose in my heart, but what matters how noble or generous it is until my hand fulfils it? Think of all the great purposes of God's love waiting to find in us the body through which it can flow into the world! So is it written of the Lord—"A body hast, Thou prepared me. Lo, I come to do Thy will."

Will it come? When, because a man is a Christian, he will be the first to go out of his way to do you a good turn? When, because a man is called by the name of Christ, he will not—he dare not—take an advantage of

another's ignorance or helplessness? When, because a man is a Christian, he is compelled to check the harsh temper, the unkind word; and is incapable of bitterness or ill-will?

The only way to flee from the wrath to come is to flee from the things that make a hell in this life—ill-temper, meanness, greed, selfishness.

Will it come? When our religion means a life without fretfulness or fear, a life over which broods the perpetual calm of perfect charity.

Pray God, O man, pray God with all the soul that is in us, to save us from the selfishness of our salvation.

OF THE APPLE THAT NEVER ROTS

A parable this, which I have published in another form, but the book containing it is now out of print, and, therefore, I will not apologise for its resurrection.

It chanced that in a certain town there lived an old man, grumpy, ill-tempered, miserable—seeing only the bad in everything and seeing it worse than it was. Religious, very—strict in his church-going; and so orthodox that he quarrelled fiercely with every one who did not agree with him. Now, it came to pass that this man of misery met with a simple countryman, whose face was sunshine and whose life was a song.

“I cannot think how it is that you are so happy,” said the old man. “You are poor, yet you never complain; and you are as happy

as the day is long—the happiest man I know. What is it? Tell me the secret.”

“Ah,” thought the simple countryman, “and you are the most miserable!” Then right cheerily he said, “I will tell you the secret certainly—I live on apples. You know that an apple was once an apple of death, but mine I call the apple of life.”

“Tell me, do, where I can get a tree of those apples. Will they do as much for me as they have done for you?”

“They will,” said the simple countryman, “if you plant them in the right place. It all depends on that. I will give you a tree of those apples, and then you can have as many of them as you like.”

So the simple countryman gave the man of misery a tree of the apples of life. But the seasons came, and went, and never a blossom was there—much less an apple.

Again they met.

“Oh,” said the man of misery, “I planted that tree, but it has borne no fruit.”

“Where did you plant it?” said the countryman.

“Plant it? Why, in my own garden, of course.”

“Ah, that is the mistake you made. You can only get those apples if you plant in somebody else’s garden.”

“Why, then, somebody else would get them.”

“No, *you* would get them then.”

And the man of misery went on his way with a sigh. “I can’t see that.”

"I wish he could see it," said the simple countryman.

And he went on his way with a song.

The apples that never rot are those that we plant in other people's gardens.

He who saveth his soul shall lose it. He who giveth away his soul in love shall find it.

X

THREE HOPELESS THINGS IN GOD'S WORLD

THERE are three hopeless things in the world
What are they ?

A DESERT.—Heaven's sunshine received, and never turned into beauty and blessing—never yielding flower, tree, fruit, corn—a blinding blaze of wilderness.

A SWAMP.—Heaven's showers received, and never sent down in rippling streams to refresh the flowered banks : to turn the mill wheel and grind the corn : to gladden and cleanse the city, and then going singing to the sea.'

A poisonous swamp.

A PHARISEE.—'The man who takes the love of God and turns it into that which swells his sense of superiority, a blind indifference to those about him, a scorn for those who are not as he is. The grace of God never given away in love, in brotherliness, in glad surrender for the service of those about him.

How vividly has the Lord Jesus given us the man in his picture of him—a mass of swollen capital I.

And He spake this parable unto certain which

trusted in themselves and despised others. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are . . . or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess.'" I—I—I—— There it begins. There it ends.

Oh, man, it were better to feed well than to fast if fasting is going to fatten thy conceit. It were better to keep thy money if giving only goes to swell thy pride.

For that man what terrible doom waits?

The Lord Jesus could find hope for the outcast, for the publican and sinner. But for him who took the grace of God and turned it into a selfish salvation came those words, the most terrible that ever fell from His lips—"Ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell!"

* * * *

All life is a matter of receiving and distributing. To receive without distributing is congestion, disease, death. To distribute without receiving is consumption, waste, death.

And in all things the highest is capable of the greatest corruption. You can get a rottenness out of a stick that you cannot get out of a stone. You can get a rottenness out of an egg that you cannot get out of a stick. You can get a corruption out of religion that is of all the deadliest and worst—religion received and never given away in love.

XI

A PARABLE

I WAS wandering along the coast, looking down the cliffs, decked with sea daisies where they sloped to the steep masses of granite touched here and there with soft lichens into dainty green and gold. Below spread the yellow sands where flocked the gulls, and whence stretched a long ridge of rocks.

I sat and gave myself up to the glory of it all—the blue, blue sky flecked with soft summer clouds, and then the sea. It needs the sea to give the sense of the infinite. A sea this of deepest blue, with patches of indigo, where the rocks, with shaggy weed, lie underneath—then an emerald green, as it sweeps in over the sands. A crested wave that sent its ripples breaking into dance and song—nature edges her skirts with lace.

The coastguard came on his way, and presently stood at my side.

“A funny thing happened on those rocks,” he began, “a thing you could hardly believe, but for all that it is true enough.”

I scarcely cared to have the fascination of the scene, and the luxury of my solitude, intruded upon thus; but there was no help for it. He

sat down at my side, and went on with his story.

"One day—'tis years ago now—an Austrian barque was driven ashore on those rocks. We fetched the rocket apparatus, and at the first shot sent the rope right into the rigging. But when those fellows aboard of her heard the gun fired, they thought we were a set of savages wanting to kill them, to get what we could out of the ship and cargo for our own.

"Away they went, scuttling about the ship like a lot of rats—anywhere for a bit of safety. It was a thing to see, and no mistake. There were the waves sweeping about her, and we knew she would soon have gone to pieces, and all the time there was the rope within their reach that could bring them all safe ashore.

"We shouted and tried to signal to them what they were to do, but it only made them the more frightened of us. I couldn't stand it any longer. I swung myself on the rope and went away down to them, hand over hand, in a hurry. There on the rocket apparatus was a board with directions in French and German what to do. I shoved the thing down amongst them.

"*'There,'* I said, *'you silly fellows, read that.'*

"They guessed what I meant, and came round it, spelling it out amongst them. Then they turned to each other trying to explain the thing.

"*'Here,'* I halloed, amidst the roar of the storm, *'don't stand there reading it over and*

over. Take hold of the rope. Reading about it won't get you ashore.'

"Then one and another crept nearer, and the first of them was sent ashore in the breeches-buoy. When they saw him waving his hands safely on the cliff, it was a fight who should be the next. Well, we got them one by one all safe ashore.

"Then they thought we were angels instead of devils. And they flung their arms about us and kissed us on both cheeks, like they foreigners do."

The coastguard-man had gone his way, but the story lingers with me still—a parable.

Fools indeed were they who thought the board of directions was to be read and nothing more. But, alas, how very often the story is true of us! Read the board as carefully and eagerly as they might, that could not save them.

Heaven has sent us the saving apparatus—and, alas, how many of us are content to read of it!

Nobody ever got any good by reading the Bible. Nobody ever got any good by hearing a sermon.

Get a music-book and look at it. *Music*-book—there is not music in a book! Call it what you will—Hallelujah Chorus, *Te Deum*—that does not turn it into music. It is only black dots on a piece of paper—that and nothing more. The organist and choir must take hold of it and turn it into music.

Open the Bible, and look at it. What shall we call it? The Word of God? The Book of Life? No—it is nothing but black spots on a piece of paper—that and nothing more.

Think of the choir standing up and looking at the notes, but never opening their mouths! Think of us looking at the words of the Bible, or listening to them, and never turning the words into life!

We have laughed when missionaries have told us of ignorant savages who swallowed the doctor's prescription, thinking the writing was going to cure them. Have we not many among ourselves who in religion are apt to do just the same thing? They swallow the words of a text, and look for a cure.

Mr. Moffatt, the famous missionary, tells us that he was once engaged in building a shed near his house, when he found himself needing some carpenter's tool that he had left behind. Taking up a chip he pencilled on it a note to his wife, asking her to send it by the Kaffir boy.

"But," said the boy holding the chip, "that cannot speak."

"All right," said Mr. Moffatt, "take it, and you will see."

The Kaffir held the chip with awe, and hastened with it to the house. Mrs. Moffatt read it, and at once gave him the tool her husband wanted—then flung the chip on the ground. The boy picked it up, almost frightened. He made a hole in it and attached a string and wore it round his neck, telling everybody—"That thing can talk."

The only good of the chip lay in the fulfilment of the message that was written on it. The only good of the Bible is when its messages are fulfilled by us and in us.

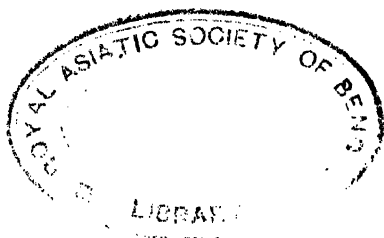
The sternest condemnation, that can meet us is when knowing stops short of doing—when seeing stops short of being.

To know and not to do, 'twere better not to know,
To see and not to be, 'twere better not to see.

A man can feed himself as well by looking into an ironmonger's shop as into a confectioner's shop, if he only looks in at the window. He must go and get something which he turns into life.

A fool is he, verily, who thinks he can get a dinner by looking into a cookery-book.

Take heed how ye hear! Take heed how ye read!



XII

A METHODIST CHILD OF THE DEVIL

AN IMAGINARY INTERVIEW

“**I** HAVE brought you a manuscript for your paper, sir,” I said, entering the sanctum of the editor with such modesty as became the occasion. He turned in his chair, and asked in his busiest tone, “What is it about?”

“A Methodist Child of the Devil,” I replied, as I held out the paper.

“What!” said he, “do I catch the words rightly? Here, let me see.”

He frowned as he looked at the heading. “Outrageous! Almost blasphemous, I might say. A Methodist Child of the Devil, indeed!” And he looked at me with a sort of annihilating indignation.

“The thing is absurd—unthinkable,” he went on angrily. “Do you really suppose that I would publish such an insult in a paper like mine?”

He rose, handed back the manuscript, and opened the door. But I lingered.

“Allow me to explain, sir. The title is not original.”

"That," said he, "is neither an explanation nor an apology."

"But if I tell you where I got the title you may be willing, at least, to look at the article."

"Got the title?" said he. "Got the title, indeed! Probably from some scoffer who can find nothing better to do than to invent such a scurrilous phrase."

"Sir," I said, "it is from John Wesley."

"You add to your impudence," cried the editor. "John Wesley would never have been guilty of using such a phrase."

Then I held out an extract from one of John Wesley's Sermons: "Some of you Methodists are twice as rich as you were before you were Methodists: some of you are fourfold as rich; some of you are tenfold as rich. How, if, whilst you get all you can, and save all you can, you do not give all you can, then are you tenfold more the children of hell than you were before you were Methodists."

The editor put on his glasses and read the words again, humming and ha-ing. Then he turned to me and said, "You may leave the paper."

THE DREAM

He was sitting in his library, a spacious place on which he prided himself, with a goodly array of books, ancient and modern. It was a close day, with thunder in the air, and he lounged in the easy chair by the open window, looking out over the garden, a pleasant stretch bordered

with flowers. An archway covered with roses stood at each end of the pathway, and in the centre the tennis-lawn, that had been refreshed with recent showers, was all a vivid green. The sound of the mowing machine which the gardener drew across it was scarcely a disturbance—rather was a soothing monotony.

He was in that pleasant frame of mind which comes from doing a good deed, for he had sent a cheque to some charity, and before him lay the letter of the secretary, with abounding thanks.

As he smoked his cigar he stretched out his hand for some volume within reach. It was Wesley's Sermons, and he was dipping here and there, somewhat lazily, when suddenly he was arrested by a text that startled him—"They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hateful lusts such as drown men in destruction and perdition."

It struck him as a terrible saying. He turned to the Revised Version, hoping, perhaps, to find it softened. He found it more severe—"They that *desire* to be rich."

He sighed within himself. Alas, who of us does not desire to be rich—parson or people? Who of us does not dream of the splendid things he would do—if only he had plenty of money? He dared not conceal from himself that he was certainly one of them. He looked back over the years, and had to confess to himself the fact that all his life, all his efforts and endeavours had been shaped by this one thing—the desire to be rich.

He turned to the sermon again. "I never heard of anyone else preaching from this text," so, Wesley begins. "Nor have I either," he said to himself, "before or since." Indeed, the text was almost new to him—one of those overlooked passages which show how blind we are when we do not want to see. He underlined the words in his Bible as a sort of apology.

He turned over the pages of the Sermons, and presently his eye fell on a passage that again arrested him. "Christianity has in it the elements of its own destruction." He read it again; and yet again more slowly and carefully.

"Surely, surely not," he said to himself. "Is not Christianity invincible, utterly beyond the powers of destruction, against which the gates of hell can never prevail? And yet its destruction lies within itself and not without? What is it?"

He lifted his face and looked out over the garden, where an apple tree was bursting into a glory of pink and white. The illustration at once occurred to him how that some creature may alight and leave its egg on the bud. And, as the blossom develops and forms into an apple, at its core lies the grub ready to eat its way out and turn the fruit to rottenness. Can there be such a germ in Christianity? What is it?

Eagerly he read on: "When a man becomes a true Christian he becomes industrious, trustworthy, and prosperous. Now, if that man, whilst he gets all he can, and saves all he can,

does not give all he can, I have more hope of Judas Iscariot than of that man."

Again he was stayed and shocked. Judas Iscariot, the black traitor, he who shames humanity by his deed of darkest infamy, preferred to the Methodist who does not give all he can! And yet Wesley was not given to violent and thoughtless rhetoric. Could it be true, or even near the truth?

The air grew more oppressive, sultry, heavier, and though deeply impressed as he was by the words he was reading, he sank back in the chair to meditate, and like the apostle who went up on the house-top to pray, he fell asleep. And like the apostle he dreamed a dream and saw a vision.

Opposite him on the couch was a figure he knew well, just as if it had come out of the Hymn book of early days—the picture which he had so often looked at by way of relief from a dull sermon. There were the familiar face, the neatly curled wig, the gown, the white hands, the silk stockings, the shoes with silver buckles. It was John Wesley himself.

* * * *

"I see, my brother," he began, "you are reading some of my Sermons. What were your thoughts as you read them, may I ask?"

"Well, I confess I was amazed to find you using such language as you do, sir. You will pardon me, I trust, but it is dreadful to think that you have more hope of Judas Iscariot

than of many Methodists. You have said some terrible things, sir."

"Ah, so did my Lord and Master, my brother; more terrible from His lips than from any other. Did he not pronounce a terrible doom upon him who layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God? Did He not say it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God?"

"Well," he said, hoping to find a sufficient excuse for himself, "I have always given a tenth of my income."

"Alas, my brother," said he, "that you should seek such consolation. You have no more to do with tithes than with mint or cummin. Allow me to inquire, when you gave your tenth, what was your income?"

"One hundred pounds a year."

"And that left you ninety pounds a year to live on. And you did it?"

"Yes, of course, I had to deny myself of some things."

"Deny yourself! Then was your giving worth something. You became prosperous?"

"Well, moderately so. I worked hard and had five hundred pounds a year."

"And that left you four hundred and fifty pounds a year to live on?"

"Yes," he said, reluctantly. Really, this kind of searching inquiry was uncomfortable. And yet, here was one whose authority he was bound to acknowledge, the founder of the people to whom he belonged.

"Ah," he sighed; "you who had managed to live on ninety pounds a year spent on yourself four hundred and fifty. And to-day, you have how much?"

"Well, all told, perhaps, a thousand or twelve hundred."

"And that leaves you nine hundred a year to spend on yourself. There is now no self-denial in your giving. It is but the superfluity of your wealth. Can you dare to call that being *rich toward God*? He looks not at how much you give, but how much you keep—at the much that is left."

He sighed and lifted up his hands.

"And this is what Methodism is come to! My words of solemn entreaty and warning not only unheeded, but forgotten, unheard. So is my work in the Lord undone. It has found in itself the elements of its own destruction."

"But I have to provide for the children," he pleaded.

"The children," he repeated. Then his eyes wandered round the room—at the pictures on the wall, at the furniture which had been carefully gathered, heeding not so much the cost as the elegance. Then he looked out over the garden and the lawn. At last his eyes rested on the box of cigars.

"My brother, you have at least provided well for yourself," he said. "And as for the children—will you hand me the volume of sermons? I suppose my words are still of some authority among the Methodist people whom I have loved as my own?"

"Undoubtedly," he said. Then he stayed, as if to correct himself. Had the words any authority for him? "Well, at any rate, in some things," he added.

"In some things! In some things! 'Better you should reject them all than select those which suit your own choice and convenience!'" Again he sighed.

Then he asked him to read the passage on which his finger rested: "Why should you throw away money upon your children any more than upon yourself, in delicate food, in gay or costly apparel, in superfluities of any kind? Why should you provide for them more pride, or lust, more vanity, more foolish or hurtful desires? Do not offer your sons or your daughters unto Belial any more than unto Molech.

"How amazing is the infatuation of those parents who think they can never leave their children enough! What! Cannot you leave them enough of arrows, firebrands?—not enough of pride, lust, ambition, vanity. Surely thou and they, when ye are lifting up your eyes in hell, will have enough both of the worm that never dieth, and of the fire that never shall be quenched."

He closed the book in silence and put it down. What could he say?

It was this terrible visitor who broke a long silence.

"Do you not hear that the hospitals are threatened with being closed? You, if you are sick, can have ease, luxury, skilful attendance

and ministry. And the Lord said it is He who suffereth in these sick ones. It is He who must go unattended and uncared for. Think you it will be nothing to face Him when He cometh to judge the world—'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these My little ones, ye did it not to Me. Depart from Me.' Wouldst thou hear from those lips the terrible words that thou dost resent from mine—'A Methodist Child of the Devil' ? "

While he slept and dreamed, the thunder clouds had filled all the heavens. He was suddenly roused from his sleep by a flash of lightning that seemed to blaze everywhere. An awful crash of thunder rolled overhead, and went rumbling and echoing in the hollow of the hills. It seemed to take up and repeat the words with which the interview had closed—*a Methodist child of the Devil.*

XIII

THE STORY OF THE SEED

AT was in the early springtime that a certain man went forth to get him a packet of flower seeds. They were wrapped in a paper gay with pictured flowers, vivid scarlet and green leaved, and tied with a silken string. On the paper was a label, and thereon the name of the seed in stately Latin, not quite correct but solemn, *Lilium Ecclesiasticum Methodisticum*. He took them home with him, and set them delicately in a cupboard on which were designs elegantly carved—angels hovered, and saints with haloes walked as in a Garden of Eden.

Then the seeds talked together.

“We ought to be very thankful to enjoy such sacred privileges. So fine and costly a cupboard for our resting-place, rich in its dainty symbolism. And a name proclaiming our orthodoxy in Latin so learned, and distinguished.”

Hear what happened. The mildew came upon them and they rotted.

But another packet of seed was there that cried—“What care we for gay wrappers and silken string !

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"What to us is your costly cupboard and orthodox label !

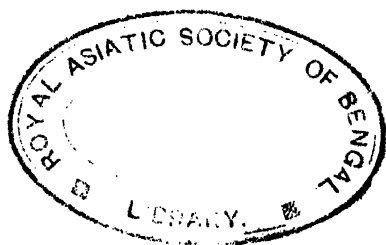
"Fling us forth into the earth, out there where bleak winds blow, and rains beat. Bury us that we may live."

And later stood the flower to bless the world with beauty and fragrance and gladness.

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The seed that kept itself to itself rotted.

The seed that gave itself away found itself in a flower.



XIV .

HOW JOHN PERMEWAN SAID THE LORD'S PRAYER

“**S**TOP!” roared John Permewan, the leader of the choir, flinging up his hands and stamping angrily. “Stop! Dick Thomas’s big fiddle is too loud. You do want it put in so gentle as can be. Now lev us gone for to take it again.”

Dick Thomas grunted something, and then boomed and twanged away more loudly than ever. Again the leader flung up his hands, and, white with rage, turned fiercely upon the offender.

“What do you mean, Dick Thomas—going on like that? I am the leader of this here choir, I believe!”

“More’s the pity,” grunted Dick Thomas, impudently.

“Well, if you don’t do what I tell ’ee you can go,” cried the leader.

“Certainly,” responded the player of the big fiddle, getting up. “And the sooner the better, I’m thinking. You won’t get nobody else.”

And Dick Thomas, making as much noise as he could, shouldered the offending instrument and went away.

So the quarrel began.

John Permewan was the blacksmith of the parish of St. Gwen's—a big, brawny man as ever flung sledge-hammer. Foremost in the parish was he in many respects, whether it was making a horseshoe, or at a wrestling bout on the village green, or holding his own in a Radical speech against squire and parson.

But it was as musician that John Permewan took himself most seriously. Church or chapel was nothing to him. So long as music was wanted he was there to play, or to sing, and to train the choir with patient care and real skill. First of the bellringers, he it was who gave the bells of St. Gwen's the chimes that went sounding across the creek to the neighbouring parish of Little Petherton when the wind was in the west. When it was elsewhere the music drifted over the moors to St. Minion's, provoking at once the admiration and jealousy of its parishioners.

Bell-ringing, like the fiery work of the smithy, was exhausting, and often led to a call at "The Cornish Choughs," and here none excelled John Permewan in his capacity for beer; not that he ever took too much, but it was enough to make the ground of a complaint against him by the teetotal Methodists, for, like most of the parish in those simple times, John Permewan belonged to both places of worship, and led in the morning the church choir, and at night the chapel choir and did both well, as he did all else.

Nor were these the only gifts that the blacksmith had. The little thatched cottage in which

he dwelt was proof of his skill as gardenet, gay with its flowers and heavy with its fruit. But of these he was always ready to give seed or graft to any neighbour, so that here the admiration was untouched by envy.

It was within this little thatched cottage, with its clustering roses, that there dwelt the sweetest possession which John Permewan called his own, his pride and joy. In the bower of the doorway, or amidst the geraniums that crowded the window, one caught sight of the sweet face of his daughter, Morwenna. Or, if the passer-by failed to see her, he might yet hear her voice ringing from garden or inner chamber, as blithe and rapturous as the lark that went soaring into those blue skies, and as flute-like as the blackbird when it perched on the bough and, saucy rascal as he was, sought to pay for the supper of cherries which he had stolen by the richness of his song.

Little did John Permewan dream as he went on his busy way that from Morwenna was to come what should be the upsetting of his authority and the bitterness of his cup. How could any harm come from her indeed—she who was as good as she was fair, who was ready to sit the night with a sick neighbour, or to read a chapter from the blessed Book, and kneel and offer a simple prayer that seemed to open the door of heaven for the sufferer and the dying? To the blacksmith it was more than any service or sermon as he sat and looked at his Morwenna, and saw in her again the bride that he had loved so well, and whose death

had brought the one great sorrow of his life.

Dick Thomas, he of the big fiddle, had gone home across the creek shouldering his burden, and now he sat by the fire smoking his pipe and grunting his satisfaction.

"I've a-had my revenge, anyhow, and that is something," he muttered to himself, and then went plotting further ill with malicious ingenuity. Of old we read that at certain times the angel of healing stirred the pool into beneficence and blessing. So is there a bad angel which, upon occasion, can stir the evil and poisonous sediment that is in most souls if you get down far enough. Even where waters are sweet and pure, and lilies grow, and wild birds find their sheltered nest, there is mud beneath if you disturb it. And thus it was with Dick Thomas.

He was the village carpenter of Little Pether-ton. Although it was a tramp of two miles when the tide was low, and three miles when the tide sent him round at the head of the creek, yet he worshipped at St. Gwen's. And his big fiddle held a position worthy of its size in all the musical doings of which John Permewan was the head. And there was none upon whom the blacksmith could count with more assurance; none more ready to heed any word or wish of the choir-master. Whoever was out of tune, the big fiddle never failed in concert pitch, or erred by a hair's-breadth from the beat of the master's hand.

It was an amazement and a mystery to John

Permewan. Whatever had come across the big fiddle that so suddenly, without hint or whisper of disaffection, it should have struck into such open revolt ?

But if John Permewan could not guess, there was one who knew, and her crimson face and trembling voice would have betrayed the secret had her father been quick enough to read it. Morwenna it was who had drawn the steps of the carpenter across the parish bounds—a line of demarcation observed far more rigidly in those days than it is in ours. It was love to her that had kept the big fiddle in tune, and made it so swiftly obedient to the commands of the blacksmith.

Dick Thomas had shown in many ways his devotion to Morwenna, without any encouragement, but never had he put the matter to any definite issue till that evening. As he came round the bend of the creek on his way to the choir practice he overtook the girl returning from a cottage, with the basket on her arm in which she had taken some dainty to the sick old body there. She had greeted him with a pleasant "Good evening," and they walked for some time in silence ; then suddenly the great tide of his love crept over him and broke like the seas that surge about the rocks.

"Morwenna, my dear, I do want to speak to 'ee."

The girl stopped as Dick Thomas set down his big fiddle and laid it by a gate.

It was a day in November. The sun was setting behind the wooded heights beyond the

creek. The rooks came clanging homeward, darkening the sky.

The girl turned her head nervously from him as he laid his hand upon her arm.

"Morwenna, I do love 'ee—love 'ee better than my life."

"I am sorry," she sighed; "very sorry."

"I will make 'ee comfortable, Morwenna, my dear," he pleaded, "and take care of 'ee."

"I cannot leave my father," she said. "And if I could——" And then she paused.

"I will wait for 'ee, my dear."

Then she turned and looked him full in the face.

"It is no use, Dick; I am sorry."

And she left him and hastened on her way.

Dick lingered by the gate. Then all his love turned to fierceness—a fire that raged within him.

"She'll be sorrier soon," he muttered angrily. So had come the revolt.

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The disaffection spread like a pestilence, for Dick Thomas suddenly became the champion of Little Petherton. None knew or suspected the cause of the change that came over him. It was enough for them that he had fallen out with John Permewan, and the parishes took up the quarrel, as became the spirit of the times.

"We are so good as they stuck-up folks into St. Gwen's any day, and better too," said every man and woman as they talked of the quarrel, "and 'tis time for to lev John Permewan know it."

So, with Dick Thomas at their head, they set up their own choir, and even sent the music of their rival chimes across the creek. Every man, woman and child in the respective parishes seemed to have ranged themselves about their leader. No man of Little Petherton would send his horse to be shod at the smithy of St. Gwen's, handy as it was, and for no bit of carpentering was Dick Thomas fetched to St. Gwen's, however pressing the need, or however awkward it might be to do without it.

St. Gwen could scarcely speak to Little Petherton, and Little Petherton went out of its way to avoid St. Gwen.

In John Permewan the dispute wrought a bitterness that showed itself in the many matters with which he had to do. In the smithy, where he had whistled a song at his work, he now snapped angrily. The choir and chimes alike lost their charm for him, and even Morwenna found it hard to please her father. The visits to "The Cornish Choughs" grew more frequent and prolonged, and Morwenna sat night after night in waiting for him, until the hour for closing compelled his return. And not even there was he a welcome guest. As thunder turns the milk sour, the storm had changed his humour to sarcasm. Morose and rude when spoken to, he sat in angry silence, and when any interrupted it he spoke with a fierceness which frightened his neighbours. The wretchedness spread through the parish. Even when the choir sang, or the chimes sounded, everybody felt that the music had gone from

them both—there was an undertone of defiance in it all which destroyed the harmony.

The more John Permewan suffered the more did Dick Thomas and the parish of Little Petherton exult. It would teach St. Gwen's not to look down on Little Petherton, anyhow, and it was time they knew it, too—so said every man and woman in the place.

To Morwenna, the innocent cause of it all, it was a chastening which brought a sadness indeed, a deep sorrow which made her only more tender-hearted, more sweet than ever in both looks and ways. Even in his bitterness her father could not but feel how her presence made the home bright and beautiful. The more he left it the more she set herself to make it attractive. His every want was anticipated, and she showed in everything how she longed to make up to him for all that was lost.

None took it to heart except Morwenna, and in her simple prayers she pleaded that there might come a happier time for them all. The prayer was answered sooner than she had hoped, and in a manner more complete than she could have dreamed.

It was in the later spring, although the winter still lingered with keen frost and not infrequent falls of snow. A series of special services were being held in the little Methodist church, which had stirred a great interest, and many had been led into the way of a new life.

One evening Morwenna sat with her father at supper; a wild night indeed, the wind howling in the chimney, rattling at the window, hissing

and raging in the leafless branches of the trees, whilst every now and then a sharp shower of hail beat upon the glass.

" 'Tis a terrible night," said John Permewan. " You aren't going out, are 'ee, my dear ?"

Morwenna sat by the fire, pouring out the tea, and, as John Permewan turned to look at her, he started, for the image of the bride that he had wooed and won long years ago was perfectly reproduced in her. He got up and laid his hand tenderly on her shoulder, and, as if conscious of having spoken too sharply to her in these troubled times, he kissed her on the forehead.

" I must go, father. I have to play and sing."

" I don't like 'ee to go by yourself, my dear ; I think I will go along, too."

Morwenna laid her hand tenderly on his and said nothing, but her look was all gladness and gratitude.

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They returned from the service and sat by the fire. It was evident that John Permewan had been deeply impressed. He sat without a word for some time, the old clock ticking solemnly in the corner, and the storm raging more furiously about the house. Presently he looked up and said, as the tears gathered in his eyes—

" Morwenna, my dear, you must pray for me."

" Father, let us pray together," she said, and they knelt at the table.

"What shall I say?" he asked, with a choke in his voice.

"I think there is nothing better than the Lord's Prayer, father," said Morwenna.

Slowly they went through its simple and sublime petitions; his was the voice that trembled; hers was firm and strong, as of one who had found in God a refuge and strength.

"Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them—"

There came a dead pause. Presently the silence was broken as John Permewan rose from his knees and sat in the chair.

"I can't say that," he whispered. "'Tis no good, I can't say it."

Morwenna waited for a while, then kissed her father tenderly and went her way to bed. He sat on until the clock struck eleven; then his daughter heard the front door opened and shut again. Her father had gone out, that was certain, but why or whither she could not guess.

Wrapping his thick coat around him, and facing the fury of the storm, he made his way down the hill and round the head of the creek into Little Petherton. Then he stood at the door of Dick Thomas and knocked loudly; knocked again, and yet again. Presently the window of an upper room was opened, and the carpenter thrust out his head.

"Who is it?" he asked. "And what do 'ee want out there this time o' night?"

"'Tis me, John Permewan, and I want to speak to 'ee."

"You!" said Dick Thomas angrily. "What do you want 'long with me?"

"I want to say that I'm sorry, Dick Thomas. If you've done me any wrong I forgive 'ee, and if I've done you any wrong I want you to forgive me."

John Permewan, as he spoke, stepped on the sill of the window below and reached up his hand.

"Will 'ee please for to shake hands 'long with me?"

The appeal went at once to the heart of Dick Thomas and woke up all that was best in him.

"'Tis for me to ask your forgiveness, John Permewan," he said, in another voice. "Mine has been the fault and the wrong, not yours."

"Well, there's an end to it all, anyhow, and God bless 'ee," and again their hands were clasped. Then John Permewan hurried back to St. Gwen's.

The storm had ceased as suddenly as it had come, and the moon shone high in the clear sky. He felt as if he had stepped out into a new heaven and a new earth, where all was peace; never had the way seemed so short.

Taking off his overcoat as he entered his cottage, he stood at the bottom of the stairs and called his daughter.

"Asleep, are 'ee, my dear?"

"No, father," said Morwenna. "Do you want me?"

"Put something round you for a minute and come down, will 'ee? I've got something to tell 'ee."

Wondering what had happened, she hastened to her father.

"My dear," said he, with a tone of triumph in his voice, "I can say the Lord's Prayer now."

They knelt together, and this time his voice was firm and strong as hers.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

From henceforth, John Permewan was a new man. The next night he and Morwenna went to the service. A new light shone in his eyes, a new tone rang in his voice, as, standing by his daughter's side, he joined with her in the singing.

It was later in the service that evening that, amongst those who rose to testify their purpose of surrender to God, Dick Thomas stood for a moment, then knelt in earnest prayer.

Of the changed lives which resulted from those services the most transformed was that of Dick Thomas. New gifts as well as new grace had come to him. Before the year was done he had become a local preacher, and his services attracted large congregations, and were rich in the best results. He was a frequent visitor at John Permewan's, with whom he became more than friend—a brother beloved.

It was as he came home from the service one

evening with Morwenna that Dick Thomas referred to old times.

"Do you mind, Morwenna, what I told you by the gate that evening?"

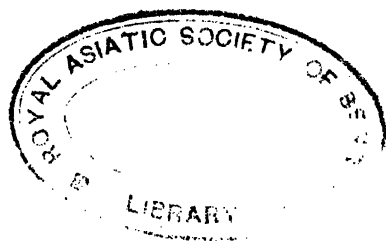
"Of course I do," said Morwenna. "Why?" And her sweet face flushed as she spoke.

"I would say it again if it would not make you sorry."

"I don't think it would," whispered Morwenna.

Dick Thomas said it again, and they were wed.

All of St. Gwen's and Little Petherton came to the wedding, for each claimed Morwenna as their own, and they were friends once more.



XV

THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD

I CAN think it was a day in March, a bitter day of bleak east wind. Under an old tree twisted by the storms crouched the poor lad, ill-clad, shivering with cold and perishing with hunger.

And about him a set of grunting hogs. The veriest cur that ever crept would have whined its way to his side and maybe have licked the wasted hand in sympathy. But these pigs—what cared they? He might lie there until the wind whistled through his hollow ribs—what was that to them? Give them their husks and they would grunt their satisfaction still.

Now come visions to the crouching lad. He sees the old home: the father with his sunny face, a perpetual benediction. There were the well fed and happy servants who greeted their master with a cheery welcome.

Then he flings himself up fiercely. “If I am going to be anybody’s hired servant I will be *his*. I will arise and go to my father.”

The new purpose puts new life into him. Slapping his sides to get some warmth he hurries away down over the hill, and presently is passing the door of the citizen who had sent

him into the field to feed the swine, and bidding him share their husks for his food.

Forth comes the citizen, his face hard, stern, pitiless.

"Here, stop," he cries, "where are you going?"

"Going home," says the lad.

Then with a snarl—"You going home! You've got no home to go to. You have had your portion of goods and spent every penny of it in riotous living. There is nothing left for you at home. Go back and mind the swine—it is the only job you are likely to get, and it is the only thing you are fit for."

Poor lad! Alas, it was true. He had taken the portion of goods and squandered it all. There was nothing left.

Then a new thought fills him. A new light flashes from his face, and once again he lifts himself, hopeful and strong. "There is one thing left," says he.

"There is nothing left, I tell you," cries the citizen. "Your character gone—disgraced, outcast, disowned, there is nothing left for you."

"Yes," persisted the lad, "there is one thing."

"What is that?"

"*My father loves me.*" And he turned and hurried on his way.

There is ever the starting point. *My Father loves me.* All else may be spent, but there is one thing we can never, never spend—*My Father loves me.*

I have left the English shores, and seen the

cliffs sink below the horizon, gone on and on for hundreds of miles until new stars shone over me. But ever and ever I was hemmed in by the heavens. Heaven ringed me round about. I could never get outside that. As the heaven doth compass the earth so are we compassed about with that infinite love. There is our strength: our unfailing hope lies in that unfailing love. There is the starting point for all—for him who has gone lowest down and spent all, it abides for ever—*My Father loves me.*

God loves the worst man living as much as He loves the best of us, every bit.

What then is the good of being good?

Is not that what the elder brother said, and says still? "If my father is going to love that miserable scamp who has spent all in riotous living, what is the good of my staying at home and doing everything he tells me?"

But how true it was. When some fierce storm swept about the old home, with howling winds and crash of thunder, the father stirred and woke. His first thought was not of the elder son who lay safely in his bed. His first thought was, "I wonder where my poor boy is on such a night as this. What shelter has he got?"

While we were yet sinners He loved us. Is it not true? It was for the lost sheep that the good Shepherd left the ninety and nine and went forth seeking, seeking unwearied, hither, thither, until he found it. It was the lost sheep that he laid on his shoulder; the torn, lame,

silly sheep that had gone astray, and brought it home with rejoicing.

The Son of God has come into this world to seek not the righteous, but to seek and to save the lost.

No man can get outside and beyond that love.

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No words but those of the Lord Jesus Himself can fitly tell us of that welcome that waited for him. They are too great, too wonderful to come from any lips but His. The world has never heard from any other anything like it.

Have we not heard that love is blind? Nay, verily. No farther vision is there, no quicker, keener sight than love. Love wears no spectacles. Love needs no telescope. His father saw *him*. He saw not the rags, or if he saw them it was only to rejoice to think of the best robes that waited for him. His love dwelt not upon the disgrace, the wasted substance. *This my son*—that was all the father saw—that was all the father thought of—that was all the father cared for.

Note one thing well. The prodigal on his way home said, "I will ask him to make me one of his hired servants." But he never said it—could not say it. That welcome choked those words. He said, "Father, I have sinned." And could get no further.

And let us learn this lesson, taking careful heed of it. It is perilous to preach repentance apart from the Father's love. Suicide is often, very often, the black despair of one haunted

ever by the misery of a wasted life, finding no goodness anywhere, in anything, he becomes his own stern judge and executioner.

There is but one place of repentance. Then those arms of love compassed him, when the warm breath of that welcome greeted him, when that great heart of love poured itself forth in that kiss of welcome, then the prodigal could say it as he could say it nowhere else, "Father, I have sinned."

The goodness of God leadeth us to repentance.

* * * *

Note further in the story the father's joy. The son is sunk in shame and bitter grief. The elder son is dumb with scorn. It is the father whose voice in fullest gladness cried, "Bring forth the best robes." It is the father who appeals to the elder brother. "It is meet that *we* should make merry and be glad."

Surely this completes the story. There is joy not only among the angels over one sinner that repenteth. The fullest, deepest, richest joy is in the heart of our Father God.

* * * *

Long years ago I was standing in a post office when an old body came in, much excited and clearly embarrassed, holding a letter in her hand.

I turned to her and said, "Can I help you?"

The tears were in her eyes and her voice choked with emotion as she put a letter in my hand and said, "'Tis from my boy, sir. We

haven't heard of him for years. He is just landed in Liverpool, and I want to send him a telegram."

"Let me do it for you," I said. I copied the name and address on the telegram form, and then turned to her, "What shall I say?"

It was with difficulty she managed to utter the words. "Tell him to come home, sir. Tell him to come home."

There is the message of the loving Father to the world.

"Tell him to come home—Tell him to come home."

XVI

WHAT A SEA TROUT DID

IT was a good many years ago—more than I care to count—when I had gone for a holiday to Scotland. I stayed at an hotel on the shore of one of the principal lochs, and every day went fishing with Jimmy, the gillie, who soon became to me a comrade and a chum.

He had suggested a visit to a remote mountain loch where the proprietor of the hotel had a boat, but to which few ever ventured because of the difficulties of reaching it. We had an early breakfast and started for a row of fourteen miles along the loch. Leaving the boat we took our lunch in our creels, and with rod and landing-net we climbed the steep mountain-side, a couple of miles of heather without a path, where the grouse rose in coveys with their protest—*Go-beck-go-beck*—and the plovers rang out their wail against the intrusion, and occasionally a startled sheep bleated in call for the flock from which it had wandered. And then we reached the shore of the little loch.

It was a day of fierce heat, and the little loch lay before us without a ripple on its surface, or the circling break of a rising fish. It was a mirror that reflected perfectly the surrounding

hills, broken only when a wild duck rose from the edge and bade its young ones lie close about the stones from which they could scarcely be distinguished. Fishing was utterly hopeless, so we lit our pipes and sat in the heather, as Jamie told me about the birds, for in the later autumn and early spring he acted as game-keeper.

"The black-back gull, sir, is a wicked bird," said he. "He is cruel, cruel—killing not for meat only, but from just a love of killing. Eleven of my young pheasants I found dead, and I watched and shot the murderous beast. It was a black-back gull. And they will eat the grouse eggs. I have found scores of the empty shells. A wicked bird, sir."

A couple of cormorants flew over the water.

"They take their toll, too, sir," said he, "for they eat ten pounds of fish a day, and that mounts up in the year. But they are welcome in a place like this, where the water is overstocked, and the fish haven't a chance of getting to any size."

He told of a scene he had watched of the black cock when the mating season had begun.

"It was a grand sight when one of the cocks came strutting and sent out his challenge like a prize-fighter, and another stepped into the ring—for a ring it was, with all the hen birds watching, ready to go off with the conqueror."

And another strange story he told me of how a forest of young trees were being killed, dying off one after the other.

"We wondered what it was—for it was only

just in that one plantation, that had the same chance of doing well as any of the others. And what do you think it was, sir? *Mice—field mice*, that ringed the bark clear round. So we got all the young owls we could, and the young kestrels, and put them in the plantation, and it was not long before not one of the mice could be found. The mice would have gone on clearing the place of the young trees."

Then suddenly from within the distant hills came the rumble of thunder. Swiftly rose huge masses of yellow-white clouds, blotting out the blue and the sunshine. Presently there came a rattling shower of hail. The change was magical. There had been a long drought, and now as the hailstones fell on the loch the trout were leaping everywhere, snapping at them, madly. We pushed off the boat, and began to cast our flies. If we had had a dozen flies, instead of three, we should instantly have had a fish on each of them. They were wild, jostling each other, in their rush—wee things four or five to a pound.

"Don't put them back," said Jamie, as he dropped them into the boat. "The shepherd's wife will salt them in for a winter's relish—a pleasant change from braxie mutton and meal. They are snowed up sometimes for weeks together, and are glad to get them."

In less than an hour we must have taken fully a hundred of these troutlets.

Meanwhile the clouds had been swallowed up in a thick haze. Then came a blinding flash

of lightning, and instantly a roar of thunder that shook the ground.

"Let us make haste out of this, Jamie," I cried.

We piled the fish into our landing-nets, drew up the boat, and hurried up the moor side to the shelter of the shepherd's cottage, and glad were we to reach it, for there came a deluge of rain.

The shepherd stood in the doorway and gave us a kindly greeting, for Jamie was an old friend. The good wife stood within, and bade me come and sit by the great fire. We got our lunch, enough for four, and shared it with them. The meal brought us into a pleasant family feeling, which on the men's part was completed by a fill from my tobacco pouch as we sat by the fire.

The shepherd himself was a grand specimen of a man, tall, broad-shouldered, with a cheery speech and kindly manner, his hand patting by turn the dogs that lay beside him. The good wife was a woman of some forty odd years, with a sunny face and the brightest of blue eyes, but slower of speech than her husband.

"So ye come from London," she ventured to say, timidly, as one unused to company. The nearest neighbours were a couple of miles away.

It was with breaks and slowly that she went on.

"A mighty place I've heard. I was in Glascae once when I was a wee lassie, and I was almost frightened to death by all the crowds of people and the roar of the streets."

Then a pause.

"Our boy is in London—our only bairn. He went up apprentice to his uncle, a carpenter. I was terrible sair to part with him. He is a good-lad is Donald. We get a letter from him every week." Then she took from a nail a large silver watch. "That was his present to me last New Year."

A longer pause.

"He tells me he's going to be wed," she sighed. "I'm most afeared for him with they grand London lassies. But she must be a thrifty body—a book-keeper, they call it, at his uncle's place."

"Well," I said, "you must give me his address, and I will get him to come to tea with me. I shall tell him what his mother thinks of him. And I think he will tell me what he thinks of his mother."

"I'm no afeared," said she, with a pleasant laugh.

The storm was done. So we shook hands with the kindly shepherd and his bonnie wife, and left the fish heaped up on a big dish. We had gone some distance towards the loch when she stood in the doorway and called after us. "Dinna forget the bairn."

"Indeed I will not," said I, as I turned and waved my hand, little thinking that I should see her again, and in circumstances so sadly different.

* * * *

I had not been long at home when Donald

came to tea with me—a youth of twenty-three or four, tall and broad-shouldered like his father, but with his mother's sunny countenance and her bright blue eyes. We had a happy talk of the day on the loch and the visit to the shepherd's cottage. It was soon after that he wrote of his wedding, and asked me to tea with his wife and himself.

I found them in a little flat in the People's Buildings, a cosy kitchen where we sat at our meal, a scullery attached, and a couple of bedrooms. Of the new wife I saw at a glance that I could make the mother's heart glad with the assurance that her son had done well. Everything about the place told of her care, and for tea she prided herself that she had made some real Scotch scones.

It was but a week later that Donald came in great trouble. He had got a letter from home with terrible tidings. His father had been killed by lightning. For three days the neighbouring shepherds had gone from dawn to dusk searching for him over mountain and moor. Then on the evening of the third day there came a poor, wasted collie dog, scarcely able to stumble over the heather, and whining, eager to lead them to the spot where the shepherd lay.

It was afterwards, when Donald wrote to me, that I heard the more complete account of it all. He told me when his mother heard of it she fell down unconscious for an hour or more. Then slowly stirring as if out of a dream, she sat by the fire, dazed. She had

not spoken a word nor shed a tear. The kindly body who had come to be with her could get no answer to any question, only a stare without thought or feeling, and a childish obedience when she brought some refreshment or led her to her bed. The coming of her son did not rouse her; she scarcely seemed to recognise him. It was as if the soul within her were numbed, paralysed, dead. He wrote that she took no heed of the arrangements for going to London. He feared that her mind had become affected, and he was in the greatest distress. She seemed to have lost everything but an outwardly bodily life, and this dull submission to those about her.

It was about a week after her coming to London that I called to see her. The son and his wife had their work to attend to, nor could they have done anything for her had one of them stayed at home. They set a glass of milk and some little refreshment by the side of the bed where she lay, but it was scarcely touched.

I had knocked at the door, but there was no response, so I opened it quietly and went in. Donald and his wife had moved the bed into the kitchen—it was larger and more comfortable. Her eyes were closed, as if she had not heard my coming, and I sat down at her side. Then she turned and looked at me.

I was horrified. Could this be the bonnie wife whom I had seen in Scotland? There rose before me again that sunny countenance and the bright eyes. Here was one pale,

haggard, wasted. The eyes were glazed, as when a lake has been frozen whilst the snow has fallen, all cold and dulled.

What could I say or do, I asked myself. A Bible lay on the shelf near by. I rose and took it to her side.

"Shall I read you a chapter?" I said.

But there was no reply. Alas, what use was there in reading to her when there was no heeding a word, much less any response? And prayer could be of no avail that met with nothing within her to which it appealed.

"If only she could be roused!" I said to myself. "If some old memory of long ago would bring back consciousness; if only this numbness could be thawed!" Beaten and almost despairing I took the cold, thin hand in mine, muttered a good-bye, and went on my way.

My thoughts were constantly of her. No longing ever filled my soul more fully than that I could in some way bring back the dead soul to life. The longing often became a prayer, for I felt that some higher and wiser help than mine could alone be of any avail.

It was a fortnight later that I called again. And again I was met with that unmeaning stare, as if the eyes, and the eyes only, saw me. Again I took the Bible and sat beside her, and let it lie before me, for I almost shrank from using it. So passed some minutes in silence. Then I glanced at the page at which the book lay open, and read the words: "So, when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon

Peter, Simoh, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

There came a flash of what—inspiration, revelation—what was it?

I sprang up suddenly, and hurried away, relieved to feel that here at last was something that I could do. I thought how the blessed Lord had not come to Peter to talk to him when he was numbed with the cold, and dulled with hunger, but He lit the fire for his warmth, and got the dinner for his hunger, and when *they had dined* He said, "Lovest thou me?" And it was a joy to me to think I was following in His steps.

In the flat beneath lived an old Scotch friend of mine. I ran down the steps and opened the door.

"How long do you boil a sea trout, Mrs. Maclachan, about a pound and a half?"

"Twenty minutes," said she, wondering at my haste; "mind ye put a handful o' salt in the water."

It was not far to the nearest fishmonger, and soon I was back again with my sea trout. I set it on a dish and brought it to her.

"There!" I said, "look what I have got for you!"

She opened those unseeing eyes and looked at me for a moment. Then she caught sight of the fish that I had set down before her.

"Here!" I said. "Let me lift you up that you may see it." And I set the pillows for her as she raised herself.

A look of astonishment flashed across her

face. Oh, what a joy it was to me to see it!

"Why," she whispered, "it's a bonnie sea trout!" The astonishment still filled her face. "And did ye catch it yoursel'?"

"I got it on purpose for you," I said.

Then there came a far-away look into her eyes.

"Eh, I mind—I mind."

Her soul was surely struggling to life again.

I listened eagerly, thinking that some memory had come that might thaw the frozen soul. The words came slowly with long pauses, her eyes fixed as if she were looking at something of long ago.

"Eh—I mind—it was afore the bairn came—I cared neither for bite nor sup. Eh, I mind it well. My gude man he went and caught me a bonnie sea trout and cooked it hissel. Eh, my braw mon!"

There were tears in her eyes now. Oh, if this cloud would but pass away in a shower.

"My braw mon!" she said again, but the tears were stayed.

I set myself to do everything I could think of to rouse her further. I took off my coat and bustled about the place with all ado, as her eyes followed me. I kept speaking aloud as I flew about the place.

"Now the saucepan, and some water. Twenty minutes, and a handful of salt in it. Is that right?" And I came back to her.

Oh, how my heart leapt as I saw a faint smile on those lips. And surely those eyes

were growing brighter. The smile grew fuller as she said in a whisper :

“ Ye a meenister, and ye ken that ! ”

I could have shouted a hymn of praise, but feared to stay a moment in my rush. I curled the fish up in the little saucepan so that it would come out on the right side—and set it on the fire—and looking at my watch—

“ Twenty minutes,” I said. “ But there, I have forgotten the handful of salt ! ”

And I peeped over my shoulder to see those eyes following me with a look of amusement, and the smile spreading its sunshine over the face.

“ And now, a dish, and a couple of plates in the oven.”

“ Oh,” it was a laugh—a tiny little laugh, but real and unmistakable.

“ And ye a meenister,” she said. This time it was more than a whisper.

I set the tablecloth, and put out the knives and forks. What a clatter I made of it all ! And then got the teapot.

“ Three spoonfuls,” I said. “ And mind the water is boiling.”

“ Oh,” another laugh—a fuller, louder laugh this time.

Now all was ready—a cup of tea poured out, and a dainty slice of the fish on her plate, and the bread and butter beside it.

“ We will say grace,” I said, and stood up at the little table. I remembered that in Scotland it was a matter much more devout than our hurried utterance. I waited with

closed eyes and clasped hands, 'waited as if for words to be given me—and I think they were. "Blessed Master, Thou hast said, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door I will come in and sup with him. We hear Thy voice, and ask Thy gracious presence with us here. Amen."

How fervent was the response—that twice repeated *Amen* !

So the happy feast went on, except that every now and then the knife and fork rested on the plate and those blue eyes were set on me, and there came again the little laugh—

"An' ye a meenister !"

I had put the things away, leaving a good supply for the son and his wife, and sat down at her side again. Those eyes were shining now with heaven's own blue in them, and heaven's sunshine filled her face. She put out her hand and let it rest on mine.

"What made ye think of it all ?" she asked.

"I will tell you." And I read the words again : "'And when they had dined.' Peter was numb with the cold and wet and hungry. The Lord would not talk to him then, but warmed him, and gave him a good dinner. 'Then He said, 'Lovest thou me, Simon ?' And Simon Peter said, 'Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.'"

I could afford to be silent for a while, and let her be filled with the thoughts, the consciousness, the life that had come back to her.

Later, I repeated the lines that are almost as Scripture itself to the Scotch soul :

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green : He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

" You know," I said, " how your braw man, the shepherd, has sometimes found a sheep away in the snow more dead than alive—too weak to stand and scarcely able to bleat. And he brought it home on his shoulders, and set it down before the fire, and tended it and cared for it, and brought it back to life again."

Her hands were clasped, and the gladness within her shone forth from the blue eyes and sunny face.

" The Good Shepherd has brought me back to life and love," she said.

I heard the son and his wife at the door.
" I must go now."

" Eh," said she, with that bright smile of hers, " I'm thinking that the fish the Master gave Peter must have been a bonnie sea trout."



XVII .

THE SONG OF THE OYSTER SHELL

A SONG it was that came to me, though lacking rhyme and rhythm, yet no less a song.

I had gone for a holiday to the Channel Islands, and joined the fishermen for a day at sea. We were becalmed at noon, so the crew lay down to doze or smoke their pipes. I was reading Geikie on Geology when I came across this statement :—

It has been estimated that the river Rhine brings down annually lime enough to supply three hundred and thirty-three million oysters with shells.

A lowly origin for my song, but like the lark that rises from its grassy nest, it went soaring up to Heaven.

I saw the Alps rise stately and sublime. "O mighty Alps," said I, "what to you in your majesty are paltry things in the far-off sea!" And the great Alps said, "Did you not know—there are three hundred and thirty-three million oyster spats waiting for their shells, and we have got to send them."

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Ah me, I thought, what a thing it is to be an oyster !

And I saw the great sun in the heavens.

" O great sun," said I, " flinging exhaustless energies of light and heat, dazzling in your splendour, what to you are paltry things in the far-off sea ? "

And the great sun said, " There are millions of oyster spats out there wanting shells, and I have got to send them."

And the sun fetched up the vapour ; and the vapour became the snow ; and the snow became the glacier ; and the glacier rent and tore the mountain side.

Ah me, thought I, what a thing it is to be an oyster.

And I saw a score of leaping, laughing waterfalls, sweeping from the mountain heights, breaking into thunder, rainbow-hued as the spray rose about them—on they rushed swiftly to the valleys below.

" Whither away in such a hurry ? " said I.

" We are in a hurry," said they.

" But why ? "

" There are millions of oysters in the far-off sea wanting shells, and we have to send the lime to make them."

Ah me, thought I, what a hurry for an oyster !

And I saw the river Rhine. " Proud river," I said, " arbiter of nations, flowing past castles that you make strong, flowing past cities that you make great, what to you are paltry things in the far-off sea ? "

And the great river said, "Why, there are millions of oysters out there wanting shells, and I have to carry the lime to make them."

We are more than oysters—let us have that conceit. And what else can be true but that all the machinery of the universe is ours to wait upon us, and minister to the least and lowest of our needs.



XVIII

THE PASSING OF PETER TREGWIN

DICK CARVOSSO had been pretty well all over the world, that is the world of miners—from Australia to South Africa, and afar off to California and Klondyke. Not from any grim necessity of failure, but because he was of a roving disposition and wanted to see things elsewhere. He had done fairly well, and had enough for his simple wants. He had been a bachelor all his days, and did all the housework of his little cottage—and did it well. He could cook anything, for in his wanderings he had learned to prepare all manner of food, from the stew of kangaroo tail to the steaks of a bear.

To me it was a pleasant thing to walk over the stretch of moor with its furze, the gold and frankincense in one, to climb the little rugged path where granite rocks thrust themselves, and to sit with him in his garden, for he really was great at gardening: And there on a bench by the cottage door you looked down over that stretch of sea from the Longships to the Lizard, and far off on the horizon was a dim haze of islands where was Scilly.

Many adventures had Dick Carvosso to tell,

wild and stirring, a stock of stories to fill a volume. He had come from my native town, and though I had never known him there, there were many old folk familiar to us both of whom it was good to talk.

"Did you ever come across Peter Tregwin?" I said one day as we sat together. His old father I remember well—a saint, something of whose prayers I can still recall. I know he made me think as a little lad that it was a mistake to make the angels like ladies with white nightdresses, and their hair hanging down their backs. To me old Malachi Tregwin was an angel in trousers—those blue eyes of his carried Heaven's sunshine in them, and that voice of his when he spoke in the Lovefeast and prayed in the prayer-meeting was like Heaven's music. He was all so different from many, perhaps from most of those who began by thanking God that He had not "*swept them away with the besom of destruction.*" How that phrase haunted me! Malachi always called God Father, and talked as if God was to him all that my own dear father was to me. And his wife, dear blessed Mary Ann, made with him a beautiful pair of saints who walked those Cornish lanes as if they were the golden streets of the Celestial City. "Did you ever come across Peter?"

Dick Carvosso lifted his hand and stroked the "goatee"—the tuft that he wore on his chin—the sign commonly of the emigrant, the rest of the face clean-shaven or close-cropped.

"Dear, dear, Petter Tregwin," Dick sighed.

"Why, he and me was boys together, and comrades so long as he lived. Where Petter went I went too—'twas share and share alike with Petter and me. 'Tisn't often brothers is so much to each other as we was. Ah, Petter, Petter! I was never much of a man to make friends, but he was more than any friend—a sort of David and Jonathan 'twas with he and me."

Again Dick Carvosso sighed heavily as he looked out over the sea.

"Then he is dead?" I said.

"Yes, yes, he's dead, poor, dear Petter."

We sat in silence for a few minutes. Then Dick Carvosso rose and went into his cottage. He came back with a Bible and a photograph.

"I do count they amongst my treasures," said Dick; "and more than any of the rest. That's Petter's Bible that his mother gived him. Take care, 'tis a bit worn, and if I lost so much as a leaf of it I should never forgive myself."

I opened it and read the inscription in his mother's hand-writing, "*God bless you, my dear.*" Then Dick handed me the photograph which had been carefully wrapped up in a silk handkerchief.

"That's his mother," said Dick.

Stiff and constrained, as all old photographs seem to be, as to the hands and figure, yet the face, that sweet, sweet face, was there all unfaded and beautiful. Again there came a silence. Dick's sad eyes still lingered over the sea, but plainly enough there were other pictures filling his thoughts. Then as he took

the book and the photograph from me he said :
“ They are sacred, they are. They was more to Petter than all the gold we ever got or ever lost, and now they are more to me.”

“ Poor Peter ! ” I said, after a long silence.
“ I remember him well—a sharp, clever boy, but always up to some boyish mischief and sometimes in trouble. But there was always one appeal that went far to check any punishment. ‘ Please don’t ’ee go for to tell mother. ’ ”

“ Yes,” said Dick, “ it was always Mother ’long with Petter. No matter where we was to, a hundred miles sometimes from any post office, there was never a chance of sending a letter but one was waiting for mother. And when good luck come, it was always to mother that the first saving went. ‘ ’Twill make her dear heart sing,’ Petter would say to me, ‘ and that’s the sweetest music I want to hear in this world or any other. ’ ”

“ That photograph has a story,” continued Dick, “ and so fine a story as any photograph ever had. We was away on the Plains in California, fifty miles from the store, a place where you could get anything for miners or cowboys, and some things it would be better to do without. The post office was there, and Petter and me had ridden in for our supplies, and to see if there was any letters. There was always a rough crowd of fellows about the place ready to drink with any new-comer, and with a pistol stuck in the belt that they was quick enough to use, and nobody to interfere with them, neither.

"Well, that day there was a letter from home for Petter, and in it was that photograph. Petter was excited enough about it, I can tell 'ee, and he and me stood outside the place, he reading the letter and me looking at the face and thinking how sweet it was. Well, Petter had finished the letter and then he kissed the photograph and put it in his pocket, his eyes shining and his face all over smiles.

"There was a big bully of a fellow sitting on a barrel of whisky, half drunk he was, and he sat watching us with a grin on his face and his hands playing with his revolver.

" 'Say, pard, come and drink to her health,' cried the fellow.

"Petter said nothing, but there came an angry frown on his face as he turned away.

"The fellow began a string of oaths and holloed, 'When I ask a chap civil to drink 'long with me I expect a civil answer. Hang me if I'm going to take a thing like that from anybody. No, sir,' and he got off the barrel and came near us.

"Petter was a little chap, and always looked years younger than he was, so the bully thought he would make short work of it.

" 'I don't drink,' said Petter quietly.

" 'What, can't you speak out?' roared the fellow.

" 'I told you I don't drink.'

" 'Well, I never! A boy that don't drink!' Then he called the crowd. 'Here, boys, this fellow don't drink—guess we'll have to larn him how—'tis time he began.'

"The others, always ready for any excitement, gathered round us.

"'No,' said Petter, 'I don't drink, and I shan't, either.'

"'We'll see about that,' laughed the bully, laying a hand on his coat-collar to drag him into the store.

"Petter kept as cool as cool could be. 'If you lads wait a minute I'll tell you why I don't drink and never did.' The hand loosened his collar, and curiosity quieted the crowd. Petter put his hand into his pocket and took out the photograph.

"'Look at that, lads,' said Petter proudly, and it was handed from one to another. 'That's my mother,' said Petter, 'the dearest woman God ever made.'

"A great silence fell on them all.

"'What do 'ee think of it, lads?' said Petter as he took the photograph into his hand. 'When a man has got a mother like that he can die if he must, and he'll do it before he would hurt her dear heart.'

"Bless 'ee, they might have been in church listening to a sermon, they was all that solemn. And Peter standing among them so simple as a child, looking at the photograph.

"'Lads,' he said, 'I promised her I would never drink, and I never have—and I'm sure there isn't one of you chaps that would like me to.'

"'Shake hands, pard,' said the bully with a bit of a choke in his voice.

"It was shake hands all round. 'You're a

man, you are, that any mother might be proud of,' said an old grizzly miner. And Peter was a sort of a conquering hero.

"We was mounting our horses to ride back when the bully came round to Petter. 'Païd,' said he, 'show us that photograph again, will you?'"

"He took it and looked at it for some moments, and when he gave it back there were tears in his eyes, and his hand trembled. '*I broke my mother's heart,*' said he."

"Ah, Peter, Peter!" I said, breaking the silence which followed Dick's story. "You were with him when he died?" I asked.

"I was," said Dick, "and I never had the heart to go anywhere afterwards. I come right home and settled. His old mother and father was dead, and half the joy of life seemed to die out of Petter's heart when they were gone. He couldn't never settle down after that, and never talked of going home. 'No, Dick,' he said, when I talked of it, 'No, they're gone, and there's nothing left to go home for now.'"

Again Dick sat in silence for some moments, his eyes fixed as if his thoughts were looking back over the years.

"'There's days in a man's life,' he began, 'when time do stand still, like the sun did in that there story in the Bible. There you are, and there you stay, never able to get away from it—never like a thing past and gone. I've said it myself sometimes; the same, yesterday, to-day and for ever. And that's what Petter's

going is to this very hour. 'A sort o' thing I never cared to talk about, like as if 'twas sacred—iss, 'too sacred for words.' .

"Give me the Bible again," I said, hoping that somehow I might get the story from him, as I opened the pages. It was the hundred and third Psalm that my eyes fell upon, and I noticed heavy pencil marks by many of the verses.

"Was this his favourite chapter?" I asked.

"Well—you shall hear it," said Dick, "for with the Bible open there I feel I could tell it all. That was his mother's favourite chapter, and his father's too. And many a time Petter would say to me on a Sunday when we was far from any church or chapel and sat in our camp together, 'Dick, lev us gone to talk of they home there. 'Twill do us good, so much good as a sermon,' and he would bring out the Bible and read that Psalm.

"It was up in the Rockies that we had gone prospecting, Petter and me, when it come on to a terrible blizzard. We had pitched our camp under a big rock in a bit of a cave sheltered under the great pine trees. It came all of a sudden, a storm that tore through the forest like thunder, and now and then came the snap of a branch or the crash of a tree. We weren't very far from the camp, and in the darkness and blinding snow we made for it as fast as we could. I was a bit in front, and when I got to the camp I looked round expecting to see Petter close by me, and he wasn't there. I went back for a few yards and there was Petter.

He had stumbled over the roots of a tree and fallen heavily against the trunk. I picked him up in my arms and carried him back to the camp so well as I could, and then by the light of the fire I saw he had a terrible gash in his forehead. The snow had stopped the bleeding, and I could just feel the flutter of life in his heart as I laid him down before the fire and tried to rub some warmth into him, for he seemed all frozen together. At last he opened his eyes—and looked up.

“ ‘Comrade,’ says he, ‘where am I?’ and he looked about the place dazed like. ‘Where’s mother to, then?’ says he. Then he fell back and sank asleep. But it wasn’t for long. ‘Comrade,’ says he, ‘where’s mother?’ says he again.

“ ‘I got the photograph and held it for him to look at, but he said——

“ ‘ ‘Twasn’t no photograph, Dick; ’twas mother herself.’

“ ‘You’ve been dreaming, Petter,’ I said.

“ ‘But Petter shook his head. ‘ ‘Twas more than a dream, Dick, and better, too. I was a little child again, back there just like it used to be. The dear of her, I could feel her hands undressing of me for the night, and I kneeled down and said the prayers she had taught me, her hand on my head just as it used to be then. And then I laid down in my bed, my hand in hers, and she a-singing me to sleep, singing about the angels.’

“ ‘Again Petter sank back, and in the dance of the firelight I could see a smile on his white

face, his lips moving as if he were speaking to somebody.

"I saw that he was sinking, so I got out the Bible and opened it there, and read it very slowly.

" 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.*'

" 'Say it again, Dick,' and his lips repeated it after me. 'Who forgiveth *all*'—he paused on that word, and said it again, and yet again—'*all thine iniquities.*' Then he lay back and his mind wandered. It was plain that he was away in the years of long ago. He put out his hand feeling for one at his side. I read on. '*Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.*' Then he sprang up from the buffalo robe on which he lay, and stretched out his hand, and thrust out his arms, 'Mother, iss, I'm comin', bless 'ee, I'm comin'.' And Petter was dead."

We sat for some time in silence, a sacred hush, as the sun went down behind the Western sea, the heavens ablaze with gold and purple glory, like lords about their dying king.

* * * *

It was Dick who broke the silence.

"You know I'm fond o' reading."

"I know you are," I said; "and I have often been delighted at your choice of books."

Then Dick went into the cottage and brought out a copy of Milton's poems.

"There's poetry," said he, "some of it like

a harp, and some of it like the roll of a drum. But Milton is the organ, great and grand and solemn."

"You put it well," I said, "that's Milton, certainly."

"But he made a mistake once, to my thinking, Milton did. Look here." And Dick opened at the *Comus* and read the lines:—

"So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,
That when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lacquey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt."

"Now, seemin' to me that they kind don't need the angels to look after them. They can take care of their own selves, they can. I like to think of an angel that could live 'long with a couple of miners all over the world, and in all kinds of company, and in all kinds of places, and keep them right and good through it all. And that's what Petter's mother did for Petter and me. That's the angel I do like to think about. Iss, that's what she was, Petter's mother."

* * * *

The Power that made a mother is the Power we can trust for ever.

A mother is Heaven's "Fear Not" to Earth.

And Heaven touches earth at both ends—the first and the last. She who is the sacred memory of what was is the prophet of what shall be. Not forlorn, not estranged, not lonely shall we go forth into that other world.

• The love that greeted thy coming then,
Is the love that waits to greet thee again.

Let us remember ever with all our hearts, and surrender ourselves utterly to heed the words of the Lord Jesus, our Lawgiver and our Judge :

This is My commandment that ye love one another even as I have loved you.

Ye are My dearly beloved if ye love one another.

